CHALLENGES TO SURVIVAL: RESPONSES OF OUTCASTS AND COMMONERS IN EARLY MEDIEVAL JAPAN

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Despite living under different social circumstances, both outcasts and commoners in medieval Japan actively fought for their own survival. Scholars have often imagined these groups to be simply the victims of exploitation, unable to assert any control over their respective situations. However, as illuminated by visual and written materials such as the *Ippen Shōnin Eden* and the laws of the Kamakura *bakufu*, outcasts and slaves clearly exerted a measure of control over their own lives. Outcasts were not simply subjugated but played essential soteriological and secular roles for medieval communities through their relationship with religious institutions. Faced with significant challenges, commoners created a number of strategies to combat the problems faced in everyday life including the sale of one's self, relatives, or retainers into servitude. Although commoners had few options, they actively entered into these agreements to assuage their suffering or the suffering of their family members.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Warriors - heroic, tragic, merciless, conflicted - paint the landscape of medieval Japanese scholarship. Perhaps, this emphasis on elite culture is justifiable since these were the individuals whose institutional decisions shaped the lives of every member in society. Elites in pre-modern society were also the producers of written works, and therefore their perspective is readily available for scholars of the medieval period. Regardless, the research done thus far on the lives of the vast majority of people within society indicates that the experience of pre-modern elites was significantly different from the rest of the population.[1] Although accounting for the fair majority of the population, the lives of lower-class commoners and liminal groups are frequently left out of mainstream political histories, since they are perceived as superfluous to the major political trends of Japanese history.

What attention has been paid to those residing in the lower strata of the medieval Japanese society is usually couched in western conceptions of agrarianism. Utilizing a European framework, scholars of the past have defined pre-modern society as essentially rural, outlining commoners in medieval Japanese society in terms such as *wealthy farmer*, *poor farmer*, and *subsistence farmer*.[2] This agrarian approach is shaped in part by visions of industrial modernity, and as more recent historians of the pre-modern period have

[1] See William Wayne Farris, *Japan's Medieval Population: Famine, Fertility, and Warfare in a Transformative Age* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006).

[2] I borrowed these terms from Amino Yoshihiko. See Amino Yoshihiko, *Rethinking Japanese History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 29.

argued, this vision only marginally portrays reality.[3] Amino Yoshihiko observes in his work that the picture of a dominant agrarian society fails to capture the complexities of the medieval economy since several occupations outside of cultivation existed within society such as miners and leatherworkers.[4] Furthermore, figures outside the agrarian order did not simply scrape by separated from society, but in fact were essential actors within medieval society.

Expanding on this recent work on so-called peripheral groups, I refocus the picture of medieval Japan to include the experiences of those residing at the bottom of the social strata: outcasts and slaves. In the past, historians have focused on these groups as liminal and as governable objects, not active agents within society. I re-evaluate assertion by examining the actions taken by both groups within their medieval context. Western scholarship on both groups remains scarce, but in general, scholars tend to approach the groups differently.

Through examination of the connection between outcasts and religious institutions past historians assert that outcasts were forced to play roles within ceremonies for religious figures with little concern for their well-being. According to this model, with the status of "defiled," outcasts were marginalized, forced out of communities, and left with no option but to enter into exploitative relationships with temples or shrines.[5] For example, Hosokawa Ryōichi, argues that religious institutions forced outcasts to be

[3] See Hyungsub Moon, "The Matsura Pirate-Warriors of Northwestern Kyushu in the Kamakura Age," In *Currents in Medieval Japanese History: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey P. Mass* (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2009), Janet Goodwin, Selling Songs and Smiles: The Sex Trade in Heian and Kamakura Japan (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), and Thomas Keirstead, *The Geography of Power in Medieval Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992)

[4] Amino Yoshihiko, *Rethinking Japanese History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 3.

[5] Hosokawa, Ryōichi. *Chūsei no mibunsei to hinin*. (Tokyo: Nihon Edita Sukuru Shuppanbu, 1994).

pawns in their religious ceremonies in order to attract lay followers.[6] He also asserts that even religious figures associated with recently emerging easy-practice oriented sects had little concern for the outcasts. Similarly, in his evaluation, Nagahara Keiji, claims that outcast groups were the forerunners of their Edo period counterparts and that the origins of early modern discrimination were to be found in the medieval period. In this retrospective fashion, Nagahara creates an unbroken history of discrimination beginning in the Kamakura period and extending onward.[7] Likewise, Michael Marra, in his discussion of outcasts in the medieval period insists that certain outcast groups were paraded in front of religious patrons as warning against disobeying religious doctrine.[8]

New scholarship complicates this simple picture of exploitation by reexamining the ideology of *kegare* (defilement or pollution), which defined outcasts as "defiled." The ideology of *kegare* existed on the opposite end of a spectrum with the concept of *hare* (purity).There were multiple social implications to this dichotomy as those residing on the top of the social strata worked to maintain *hare*, while those with relatively low social status tended to be classified as *kegare*.[9] In his evaluation of outcasts, Thomas Keirstead argues that the ideology of defilement was more nuanced than simple classifications of

[6] Hosokawa, *Chūsei no mibunsei to hinin*, 22-30.

[7] Nagahara Keiji, "The Medieval Origins of the Eta-Hinin," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 5, no. 2 (1979): 389.

[8] Michael Marra, *Representations of Power: The Literary Politics of Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 71.

[9] For more on authority and *hare* see: David T.Bialock, *Eccentric Spaces, Hidden Histories: Narrative, Ritual, and Royal Authority from The Chronicles of Japan to the Tale of the Heike.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

"defiled" and "pure," and could encompass any member of society at any time.[10] Considering *kegare* in terms such as this, Keirstead maintains that outcast groups were not necessarily bound to the discriminatory practices of later periods. Amino also asserts that the medieval population linked *kegare* to a number of different phenomena and although feared, *kegare* was part of the daily lives of every individual.[11] Religious scholars too have argued against the exploitative connection between outcast groups and religious figures. In his examination of the Ritsu sect leader, Eison, David Quinter determines the rhetoric of salvation was sincere and religious figures actively sought to help assuage the suffering of the defiled. [12]

Slaves and indentured servants have received little attention by western scholars, and those that have examined them focus on the exploitation of the indentured population. In his analysis, Wayne Farris studies servitude in society through the lens of acquisitive warriors whose policy of *jiriki kyūsai* (self-help) forced peasants into service through conscription and the destruction of their livelihood.[13] Thomas Nelson on the other hand, examines both international slave trade and domestic slavery, determining that Japan was involved in a thriving global network of slave trade, while simultaneously an internal and less systematize organization of slaves existed in the archipelago.[14]

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[10] Thomas Keirstead, "Outcasts Before the Law: Pollution and Purification in Medieval Japan," In *Currents in Medieval Japanese History: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey P. Mass*, ed. Gordon Berger et al. (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2009).

[11] Amino, *Rethinking Japanese History*, 177-179.

[12] David Quinter, "Creating Bodhisattvas Eison, Hinin, and the Living Manjur," *Monumenta Nipponica* 62, no. 4 (2007): 437-458.

[13] Farris, *Japan's Medieval Population*, 48-55.

[14] Thomas Nelson, "Slavery in Medieval Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica* 59, no. 4 (2004): 463-492.

I argue that presumptions of simple exploitation are inaccurate portrayals of the roles and lives of both outcasts and slaves in the medieval period. Outcasts and slaves were active agents who worked to assuage their seemingly desperate situations. While outcasts capitalized on their own defiled status through associations with religious institutions, the commoner populations sought to survive through the sale of their person, their relatives, or their retainers into the servitude of wealthy households. Approaches taken by the two groups were dramatically different because they each adhered to the circumstances of their social positions, but in both cases, these actors fought for survival amid the tumultuous medieval period.

In Chapter One, I begin by examining the ideological underpinnings of the status of "outcast" in the medieval period focusing on both Shinto and Buddhist notions of defilement or *kegare*. I argue that defilement, though having roots in ancient Shinto myths, was especially informed by Buddhist conceptions of karma. In looking at the amalgamation of the two ideologies, I also explore Buddhist notions of female impurity. Drawing on the work of Mary Douglas, I will show how outcast groups such as *inu-jinin*, *sarugaku* actors, and *hinin* were able to play essential roles within religious communities. I propose that the terms "outcast" and "peripheral" fail to capture the complexities of the lives of these groups. With such a vital and semi-symbiotic relationship with influential religious institutions, these groups seem to be neither completely cast out of society nor separate from the center of power. As Mikael Adolphson explains in his work on power structures in the medieval period, religious institutions played an integral role in the rulership of the period along with the military government and aristocracy.[15] Performing

[15]Mikael Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Premodern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000).

important soteriological and secular functions for temples and shrines meant that outcasts were connected to the *kenmon*, and therefore connected to the center of power. This unique relationship between temples and outcast groups should be taken into account when considering the nature of their social status and position in society. Thomas Keirstead explains that terms used during the medieval period can be problematic to evaluate as historians due to the multiplicity of labels given during the period.[16]

Instead of thinking of outcasts as simply peripheral and marginalized from society, I suggest they are better understood as having been "liminally central." By this, I mean that while outcasts remained distinct from the centers of power, they played important roles helping to extend the influence of religious institutions. Thus, they were not simply peripheral (liminal) to society, but were integral to the center of power. Although the term outcast itself fails to capture the nuance of these groups, for ease of reading the project, I will still refer to these "liminally central" figures as outcasts.

Chapter Two focuses more specifically on one group of outcasts that receives little attention: *hinin*. *Hinin,* like all outcast groups were bound to their "defiled" status. However, unlike other outcasts, they were also cast as blasphemers of Buddhist doctrine afflicted with karmic illness. Described simply as "beggars" living on the outskirts of society, the agency and important soteriological role of this group has been overlooked within medieval society. New Buddhist ideologies that sought to actively engage "defiled" members of society also shaped the survival of these groups. Through examining their appropriation of space around Buddhist institutions from the images of the *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, I will demonstrate how they actively sought to support their

[16] Keirstead, "Outcasts before the Law," 267-291.

existence through eliciting donations from generous Buddhist patrons. I also offer a glimpse into the poorly researched lives of the *hinin* population.

Chapter Three shifts focus to the population at large and examines challenges faced by the commoner population within medieval society. Without understanding the social circumstances of the commoner population, the impetus for the sale of oneself into servitude is not entirely clear. Climate, famine, illness, and warfare shaped the circumstances of the medieval population. Survival for those located at the bottom of society, was dependent on their own individual actions.

Chapter Four evaluates the domestic system of slavery with Japan through examination of Kamakura laws. By investigating articles issued by the Kamakura *bakufu*, I illuminate how slavery and indentured servitude were survival strategies of the commoner population. Without the ability to sell themselves, their families, or their retainers, subsistence might not have been an option. Translation of laws on servitude and slavery also provides valuable insight into the judicial system of the warrior government, which actively sought to protect vulnerable members of society. In this chapter, I use the terms slave and servant interchangeably, since slavery and servitude were both social designations given to commoners bound to wealthy households in exchange for sustenance.

In my conclusion, I note that the social circumstances of outcast groups and slaves were considerably different. Notions of *kegare* bound outcasts to their defiled status in society and linked them with religious institutions. Slaves and servants on the other hand were once commoners faced with the extensive challenge of subsisting in the midst of drought, disease, and warfare. Unlike outcasts with their affiliations to temples and

shrines, commoners sought relationships with wealthy households in order to survive the medieval period. Despite their differences, both outcasts and slaves actively struggled to survival. They were not simply objectified pawns in the schemes of elites within society. They were agents shaping the destiny of their own lives.

CHAPTER II

DEFILEMENT AND OUTCASTS

One story from the Heian period, *Konjaku Monogatari* (*Anthology of Tales from the Past*), tells of a young noble man and his secret pilgrimage to Kiyomizu-dera.[1] Once he reaches the temple, he sees a beautiful young woman and finds himself instantly drawn to her. The passion aroused in him drives the young noble to focus all his energies on courting the stunning woman. Learning of the lavish home south of Kiyomizu-dera where she resides, he arranges a meeting with the beauty and finds that she is also of noble birth, but was abducted by the owner of the estate after the death of her parents. Despite his seemingly extravagant manor, she refers to her kidnapper as a beggar. This tale raises significant questions about the designation of "beggar" actually represented. This tale indicates either that begging as a profession was exceedingly lucrative, or that 'beggar' was a term not restricted simply to the occupation of requesting monetary support from generous onlookers.

In the late Heian and Kamakura periods, those panhandling near religious sites were what western scholars have called "outcasts." However, outcasts located near religious sites were not merely those seeking donations. Diverse outcast groups such as *inu-jinin*, *sarugaku* actors, and *hinin* all had direct relationships with religious

[1] Marian Ury, *Tales of Times Now Past: Sixty Two Stories from a Medieval Japanese Collection*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 189.

communities related to their "defiled" status.[2] It is highly likely that the 'beggar' from the tale was not literally a beggar, but held the same outcast status as those who did solicit charity from religious travelers.

Outcast groups within medieval Japan consisted of a diverse assemblage of humanity. Historians of pre-modern Japan, such as Amino Yoshihiko and Nagahara Keiji have identified several disparate groups, including performers, temple assistants, butchers, and leather workers, that were marginalized due to their "defiled" status. Outcasts, therefore, were not demarcated simply by occupation or economic vitality. Instead, the one uniting feature of all outcast groups was their connection to the ancient and medieval concept of *kegare* (in English defilement or pollution).

Generally, scholarship on outcasts has worked backwards, extrapolating from the later institutionalized discrimination of the Edo period, which restricted the actions of outcasts such as *kawata* and *hinin.* Nagahara Keiji in his examination of the origins of *eta-hinin*, begins in the present, supposing the system of discrimination existing after the Tokugawa period was born from inequitable practices in the medieval period. For Nagahara, discrimination was a given and groups existing in Kamakura and Muromachi Japan were the predecessors of their Edo period brethren. Hosokawa Ryōichi, in examining the relationship between religious communities and outcasts, determined much like Nagahara, that Buddhist institutions exploited outcasts for their own purposes.[3]

However, scholars such as Thomas Keirstead and Amino Yoshihiko have challenged this assertion, insisting that outcast groups within the medieval period were not only diverse, but were also not bound to the discriminatory features of later periods.

[2] *Inu-jinin* translates to "dog-person." *Sarugaku* was a popular style of performance during the eleventh through fourteenth centuries and the precursor to *nō* theatre. *Hinin* translates to non-person.
[3] Ryōichi Hosokawa, *Chūsei no mibunsei to hinin*, 22-30.

In fact, according to Keirstead, the defilement that defined their social position might have relegated them to the margins of the realm, but did not immediately make them "ready-made subjects of exploitation."[4] Amino Yoshihiko argues that the misinterpretation of abuse is related to the tendency of modern scholarship to focus on the agrarian economy of medieval Japan.[5] By assuming that the majority of society in pre-modern Japan was agrarian, and that all economic vitality was related to profits derived from the products of cultivation, groups not attached to land (*muen*), such as outcasts appear forced out of the structures of power.

Through examination of the relationship between religious communities, such as temples and shrines, and outcast groups, I will illustrate the important non-agrarian secular and soteriological roles played by outcasts within medieval society. By utilizing their "defiled" status, outcast groups could exclusively perform specific functions in society, making them essential and significant members of religious communities. Necessary for understanding the roles of outcasts in religious communities, I will first examine *kegare* as it appears in Shinto and Buddhist ideologies, paying particular attention to Buddhist constructions of the female impurity in medieval society. I will then focus on the outcasts groups of *inu-jinin*, *sarugaku* actors, and *hinin,* examining the vital roles each group played in religious communities.

Kegare

As a term, *kegare* remains poorly defined. However, scholars generally acknowledge that constructions of pollution date back to ancient Shinto creation myths

[4] Thomas Keirstead, "Outcasts before the Law," 272.

[5] Amino Yoshihiko, *Rethinking Japanese History*, 3-6.

and were associated with death and bodily excrements such as blood.[6] According to cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas, pollution as a concept in society is intricately linked with disorder.[7] General concerns for defilement were connected to *kami*, who found these polluting items to be repugnant and retaliated through disruption of society.[8] Fear over contact with polluting items was derived from the communicability of the *kegare*, which could easily be transferred between people or to spaces simply through contact. If a person came into contact with a dead body, he or she became pollution. Unless that now defiled individual observed an avoidance period, they could spread their pollution to other enclosed spaces they occupied such temples or palace rooms. As Amino explains, this was a particular problem for the emperor and the state since defilement of the emperor resulted in his seclusion and the halting of political activities.[9] Pollution, therefore, was a very real and significant threat to order in society.

However, the concept of defilement was not static and changed considerably over time. By the medieval period, these ancient understandings of purity and defilement were altered by the popularization of Buddhism. As historians such as Haruko Wakabayashi note, the successful expansion of Buddhism lay in its syncretic nature.[10] By adopting and

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[6] See Nagahara Keiji, "The Medieval Origins of the Eta-Hinin," 389. Thomas Keirstead, "Outcasts before the Law," and Jacqueline Stone, "The Dying Breath: Deathbed Rites and Death Pollution in Early Medieval Japan,"In *Heroes and Saints: The Moment of Death in Cross-Cultural Prospective*, eds. Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007): 176-243.

[7] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, (New York: Routledge, 2005).

[8] Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 177.

[9] Amino, *Rethinking Japanese History*, 177-179.

[10] See Haruko Wakabayashi. *The Seven Tengu Scrolls: evil and the rhetoric of legitimacy in medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012). In this work on *tengu* in medieval Japan, she asserts that instead of completely displacing indigenous beliefs, Buddhism was generally adapted to popular thought of a particular area. Haruko Wakabayashi highlights one example of Buddhist

assimilating Shinto ideas of defilement, Buddhists were able to extend their influence throughout the archipelago. Undoubtedly, Buddhist doctrine already exhibited metaphorical understandings of defilement and purity that were readily assimilated into the already existing Shinto belief system. Beginning with ancient myths, I will elaborate on Shinto constructions of defilement, which appear both transient and easily removed. I will then examine medieval Buddhist understandings of *kegare,* including conceptions of the female form.

In the ancient *Kojiki* (*Record of Ancient Matters*), the story of Izanami and Izanagi portrays defilement as transient and related to death.[11] While giving birth to the fire god, Izanami dies, leaving her brother-husband Izanagi distraught. Unable to carry on without his beloved, Izanagi travels to the underworld to reunite with his deceased wife and bring her back to the world of the living. Upon finding her, he pleads for her to return to their former lives, but after being in the land of the dead and eating from the hearth of *Yomi* (the underworld), Izanami cannot leave without permission. Izanami eventually agrees to petition the gods of the underworld for her to return to the land of the living, but she has one stipulation: Izanagi must promise not to look at her. Izanagi agrees to the conditions, but steals a glimpse of his wife and to his horror, sees a rotting corpse covered in maggots. Severely distressed at her condition, Izanagi flees to the world of the living.

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incorporation of Shinto belief in her investigation of *tengu* in the early medieval period.[10] As she explains, in the late Heian period, nobles regularly employed esoteric Buddhist priests to perform mystical rituals to placate *mononoke*. Evil spirits existed in Japan before the popularization of Buddhism and were frequently thought to be people treated badly in life, come back in spirit form to harass the living. Although Buddhists saw these spirits in terms of Ma (evil), particularly evil associated with attachment and the prevention of reaching enlightenment or rebirth in a better realm, the two conceptions of evil spirits became incorporated into each other. *Ma* and *mononoke* (in the form of *tengu*) became intertwined in the medieval period specifically because Buddhist practitioners offered solutions to pacify unpredictable forces. In the same way Buddhists incorporated *tengu* into their ideology, Shinto conceptions of defilement were fused with Buddhist constructions of karma.

[11] Basil Hall Chamberlain, *The Kojiki: Records of Ancient Matters* (Rutland: C.E. Tuttle Co. 1981), 40.

Izanami, outraged by the betrayal, sends the *kami* of *Yomi* after him. Narrowly escaping his pursuers, Izanagi returns to the world of the living and closes the gateway to the underworld by placing a large boulder across the opening, forever locking Izanami in the land of the dead and separating the two realms indefinitely. Izanami becomes the ruler of the underworld, while Izanagi immediately performs a cleansing ritual (*misogi*) to purify himself from the defilement associated with the decaying, death ridden underworld. Out of this purification ritual, the sun goddess, Amaterasu, the goddess linked to imperial lineage, is created along with twenty five other deities. In this version of the events following the death of Izanami, the underworld, as well as the dead residing in the realm, were envisioned as defiling; and exorcism of defilement was easily conducted via a cleansing ritual.

However, other tales from the *Kojiki* complicate this simplistic view of defilement, as explained by Jayne Kim in her study of defilement discourse.[12] According to Kim, in the *Kojiki,* two categories of defilement are represented: *touch defilement* and *transgression defilement*. The story of Izanami's death and Izanagi's subsequent journey represents the former type of defilement, defined as the pollution occurring when contact with something defiled occurs. Touch defilement is also transient and easily exorcised with purification ceremonies and the observance of avoidance periods. Transgression defilement, on the other hand, is pollution transmitted from crime of sin and is complex, requiring unique measures to exorcise. The story of the expulsion of Susano'o from paradise illustrates this sort of defilement.

[12] Jayne Kim, *A History of Filth: Defilement Discourse in Medieval Japan* (PhD Dissertation: Columbia University, 2004).

The brother of Amaterasu, Susano'o, destroys the ridges surrounding Amaterasu's heavenly-rice paddies, and defecates in public. Conflicted on how to deal with Susano'o's actions, Amaterasu secludes herself in a cave. Eventually, Amaterasu is forced to decide when Susano'o kills a divine weaving maiden. She determines that Susano'o must first give 1000 tables as compensation for his vandalism. In addition, he is forced to cut his nails and beard, and is expelled from heaven to live out his life as a wandering beggar. To restore order to the community, no simple purification ceremony can be conducted; instead, Susano'o must be expelled following financial restitution.

According to the *Kiki* myths, defilement occurred when individuals encountered death or disrupted societal order.[13] These versions of pollution appear as transient, exorcised relatively simply through *misogi* (cleansing ritual), seclusion from society, or expulsion of disorder causing elements. Actions of the aristocracy during the ancient and early medieval periods indicate noble ritual avoidance of pollution. Historians have pointed to the continuous movement of the capital following the death of every emperor prior to 794 CE to reflect the wishes of the court to avoid death pollution.[14] Indeed, the death of the emperor was considered to be a national defilement, and diviners were used to cleanse the nation. [15] Other purification ceremonies such as the *norito* prayer of *The Great Exorcism of the Last Day of the Sixth Month* were conducted to cleanse the nation's polluting sins. This prayer divided transgression into two categories: heavenly sins and earthly sins. Heavenly sins were generally those that affected the community

[13] The myths of the *Kojiki* (c. 712) and *Nihonshiki* (720) are collectively called the *Kiki* myths.

[14] Nagahara, Keiji. "The Medieval Origins of the Eta-Hinin," 387.

[15] Michael Marra. "The Buddhist Mythmaking of Defilement: Sacred Courtesans in Medieval Japan," *The Journal of Asian* Studies 52, no. 1 (1993): 50.

such as covering up ditches and breaking down the ridges of fields (i.e. Susano'o's transgressions).[16] Earthly sins, on the other hand, were those that only affected individuals or forbidden actions, such as rape or cutting living flesh. Once prayer was conducted, the entire state was cleansed and no sins remained according to the *norito*,

> Beginning from today, each and every sin will be gone…Know that [all sins] have been exorcised and purified/In the great exorcisms performed in the waning of the evening sun/On the last day of the sixth month of this year.[17]

Defilement, therefore, was impermanent and the ease of removal depended on type of pollution and actions taken by the court such as the movement of the capital and national purification ceremonies.

Medieval Defilement

Although *kegare* has roots in the ancient period, by the medieval period, Buddhists openly acknowledged and actively worked to avoid defilement. Certainly, before the introduction of Buddhism to Japan, the religion displayed its own metaphorical perception of defilement. As Jacqueline Stone explains in her study of deathbed rites and rituals, someone who had become enlightened was considered to have a "pure" mind, while those with a deluded mind were said to have a "defiled" mind.[18] Monastic Buddhists also followed their own codes of "pure" conduct such as refraining from the eating of meat and killing of animals. As Mark Unno explains, monastic regulations in the medieval period concerning proper etiquette when using tools and texts, reveals the

[16] Kim, *Defilement Discourse*, 30.

[17] Donald L. Philippi, *Norito* (Princeton University Press, 1990), 45.

[18] Jacqueline Stone, "The Dying Breath: Deathbed Rites and Death Pollution in Early Medieval Japan,"*In Heroes and Saints: The Moment of Death in Cross-Cultural Prospective*, eds. Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 174.

relationship between ritual purity and Buddhist practices.[19] In his *Recommending Faith in the Sand of the Mantra of Light*, the thirteenth century Shingon monk Myōe Kōben, insisted on the use of "pure" sand in performance of the *Mantra of Light*. Purity in this case was related to quality of sand and locations from which the sand was derived. In answer to a question about sand obtained from an impure place, Myōe writes,

> The teaching of the mystic power of the Mantra is exceedingly pure and comes to fruition. If it is defiled [with impure sand], then Vināyaka and other deities will gain a foothold and hinder realization of [mystic power].[20]

What constituted impure sand appears slightly mysterious as Myōe illustrates his understanding of the pure and defiled by posing another question regarding the purity of sand imbued with gold. He answers that, "although one has listened to this discussion of equality, if one still desires sand-gold and does not desire ordinary sand, then one still regards sand-gold treasure."[21] According to Unno, the purity of ordinary sand lay in its ability to let practitioners release their attachments through the ritual of gathering the sand itself. In the same way, the proper etiquette, including ritual purification taking place in the daily lives of monks was more metaphorical than literal.

However, at least some Buddhist practitioners acknowledge pollution as a real phenomenon. Ryōgen, a tenth century Tendai monk and abbot of Enryakuji, officially acknowledged pollution when he issued an apology to a protector *kami* residing near his temple on Mt. Hiei because he had unintentionally passed near the shrine of the deity

[19] Mark Unno, *Shingon Refractions: Myōe and the Mantra of Light* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications: 2004), 112.

[20] Unno, *Shingon Refractions*, 112.

[21] Unno, *Shingon Refractions*, 115.

after coming into contact with defilement associated with death.[22] This example illustrates how some Buddhist monks recognized death defilement and worked to avoid the pollution associated with it. Some temples even enforced a thirty-day avoidance period for pilgrims who had come in contact with death.[23] One story from the *Konjaku Monogatari* further illuminates this point. In order to steal a temple bell, a thief pretends to die near the bell. His co-conspirators remove his body, but despite removal of the deceased, the monks avoid the area for thirty days to avoid defilement. Knowing this practice, the thieves come back a couple days later and are able to steal the bell without interference.[24] Clearly, Buddhists during the late Heian and early medieval periods recognized pollution and sought to avoid it.

Women and Impurity

However, as Shinto conceptions of defilement influenced Buddhist practices, Buddhist ideas of the female body became entrenched in notions of defilement. In Japan prior to the Heian and Kamakura periods, women played prominent roles in religious activities as *miko*, which was akin to a female medium or female shaman.[25] These women functioned as mediators between humanity and *kami* during the ancient period, placing them as the arbitrator of the word of the divine. Since *miko* functioned as a sacred and integral part in religious communities, issues of impurity did not appear to be an issue. Instead, it was Buddhist ideas that linked the female form to impurity.

[22] Stone, "The Dying Breath," 179.

[23] Stone, "The Dying Breath," 178.

[24] Michael Marra, "The Buddhist Mythmaking of Defilement," 63.

[25] Lori Meeks, "The Disappearing Medium: Reassessing the Place of Miko in the Religious Landscape of Premodern Japan," *Chicago Journals* 50, no. 3 (2011): 209.

A statue from the Asuka period in Japan encapsulates early Buddhist constructions of the female body. The Queen Māyā stands, right arm extended as if reaching for the sky, while he left arm is stretched tensely down to her side (Figure 1; see the Appendix for all figures). The right hand grasps empty air and the left hand is balled up grabbing the flared sleeves of her garment. Surrounding her are three kneeling, heavenly attendants. The robes of all the attendants are flying behind them, as if a great wind is eminating from the central figure, Queen Māyā. The attendants watch the Queen Māyā as from the robe of her extended right arm, a small figure peaks out. A bump on the head of the figure protrudes, as he raises his hand to his head as if in salute. Although part of the same image, the set of gilt bronze figurines is incomplete, lacking any backdrop that was seemingly lost over the course of time.[26] The tiny figure escaping from the sleeve of the garment is the Shakyamuni Buddha, and the set of figurines together encompasses his nativity scene.

The story of the birth of the Buddha is one surrounded by magical circumstances including the avoidance of impurity associated with the womb of his mother. The story is relayed through several different texts compiled after the death of the Buddha including the *Buddhacarita,* one of the oldest texts describing the life of the Shakyamuni. In explanation of the miraculous birth, the *Buddhacarita* explains,

> Now other mortals on issuing from the maternal womb are smeared with disagreeable, impure matter; but not so the future Buddha. He issued from the mother's womb like a preacher descending from his preaching-seat, or a man

[26] Tanabe Saburosuke, "From the Stone Buddhas of Longxingsi to Buddhist Images of Three Kingdoms of Korea and Asuka-Hakuhō Japan," In *Transmitting the Forms of Divinity: Early Buddhist Art from Korea and Japan,* ed. Washizuka Hiromitsu (New York: Japan Society, 2003): 41-48.

> coming down a stair, stretching out both hands and both feet, unsmeared by any impurity from his mother's womb, and flashing pure and spotless.[27]

The portrayal of the birth of the Buddha, not through his mother's genitals, but through her side, depicts the avoidance of impurity caused by female bodily functions prevalent in early Buddhist literature. These negative conceptions of the female body were not uncommon in South Asia in the early period where "particular ideas about gender were most vividly expressed in beliefs about female pollution."[28] Specifically, the belief in South Asia that menstruating women caused pollution in areas simply through physical contact, led to banishment of women from sacred sites in the Vedic Period.[29]

However, concepts of female pollution might have stemmed from concern for the control women had over men in the form of temptation. As the Shakyamuni came close to reaching enlightenment the ruler of the realm of desire, Mārā sent his beautiful daughters to tempt the Buddha and ruin his attempts to attain awakening. His three daughters, the embodiment of the three temptations of lust, aversion, and craving, appear before the Buddha. However, the Buddha is not tempted and in fact is repelled by them.[30] In this story, women are the embodiment of temptation and therefore, the antithesis of enlightenment. Women were thus equated with attachment and hindrances to enlightenment.

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[27] Henry Clark Warren, *Buddhism in Translation: Passages selected from the Buddhist Sacred Books* (India: Motilal Banarsidass, 1896): 46.

[28] Alan Sponberg. "Attitudes Toward Women and the Feminine in Early Buddhism," In *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender*, ed. Jose Cabenzon, 3-36 (New York: State University of New York Press, 1985), 19.

[29] Sponberg, "Attitudes Toward Women," 29.

[30] Diana Paul. *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in the Mahayana Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 7.

This notion of the innate impure nature of the female within early Buddhist texts was transmitted to early and medieval Japan, amalgamating well with already pre-existing ideas of *kegare* and appearing in Buddhist actions and discourse of the period. In the Heian period, Buddhist temples such as such as *Enryakuji* and *Tōdaiji*, began barring women from entering the premises due to their defiled nature. Although women in the medieval period frequently did renounce the world to become nuns and even formed their own Buddhist networks, prominent Buddhist discourse painted women as innately defiled and therefore unable to achieve enlightenment in their own female bodies.[31] In his popular fourteenth century work, *Mirror for Women* Mujū Ichien, explains the seven vices of women including jealousy, shameless desire, and defilement associated with menstrual blood and childbirth. [32] The medieval adaptation of the *Sutra of the Blood Bowl* further demonstrates the defiling nature of female menstruation. The sutra explains that women who died in labor were forced into a huge pool of blood formed by the accumulation of female menses.[33] Natural bodily functions categorized the female body as impure, but indeed their many negative characteristics painted women as spiritually impure beings as well. Among the seven vices of women the Mujū contemplates, he lists the lack of regret for arousing the sexual desires of men. Reaching enlightenment required detachment from earthly desires including sexual urges brought on by the female form. To be born as an innately defiled female was considered a karmic

[31] For information on medieval Buddhist nuns see, Lori Meeks, *Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders in Premodern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010).

[32] Robert Morrell, "Mirror for Women: Mujū Ichien's Tsuma Kagami," *Monumenta Nipponica* 35, no. 1 (1980): 49.

[33] Morrell, "Mirror for Women," 67.

punishment for past actions.[34] Hinting at this karmic problem, funeral sermons conducted by Sōtō monks read, "Having received the three refuges and five precepts, [you] secured a karmic link to the road to enlightenment; now shed the defilement of your female body."[35] The female form was linked to defilement and proved a hindrance to enlightenment.

Just as Buddhism was disseminated through the incorporation of native religions, already existing conceptions of *kegare* were transformed by Buddhist understandings of female vice and impurity. According to Buddhist doctrine, women were innately defiled due to the impurities of their natural bodily functions. Male Buddhist practitioners also envisioned birth as a female to be linked to karma, insisting that birth into a female body alluded to karmic punishment for past transgressions.

Investigation of female pollution illustrates how defilement was not limited to outcasts in society, but could encompass any number of groups, including half of the population in the form of women. The adoption of pollution rhetoric surrounding the female body in medieval Japan also illuminates the amalgamation of Shinto *kegare* with Buddhist understandings of defilement. Just as death pollution required an avoidance period, seclusion during childbirth or menstruation became an observed practice.

Outcasts and Religious Sites

In some cases, Buddhist practitioners residing at religious sites, such as temples and shrines, employed outcasts in order to avoid the detriments of defilement while simultaneously addressing the needs of the populace and therefore extending Buddhist

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[34] William Bodiford, *Sōtō Zen in Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 206.
[35] Bodiford, *Sōtō Zen in Medieval Japan*, 206.

networks to the provinces. As previously mentioned, historians of the medieval period envision these relationships as exploitative. However, the relationship between outcasts and religious communities was more complex than simply one of benefactor and beneficiary. In order to avoid problems associated with defilement, Buddhist priests utilized outcast groups and as a result, these groups held important secular and soteriological positions within religious communities. By exploiting the ideology that supported their marginalization, outcasts were able to secure a place in society during the tumultuous medieval period. Examining the association of groups such as *inu-jinin*, s*arugaku* actors, and *hinin*, illuminates this point.

Inu-jinin

One such outcast group that was utilized by Buddhist practitioners assisted temples in funerary rites. *Inu-jinin*, also referred to as *sōsō hōshi*, performed tasks related to death pollution. Employment of *inu-jinin* by the temples as mortuary workers was beneficial to monks and the Buddhist establishment in general because it allowed priests to serve in a funerary capacity without actually having to touch the dead and thus avoiding the pollution caused by death. Janet Goodwin explores how providing mortuary rites gave priests the chance to provide a service to *bushi*, creating and extending networks into the provinces. Buddhist institutions were also able to extract donations as well as devotion from the families of the deceased in order to save the dead person's soul. In 1325, after donating to a temple, a woman declared: "My purpose in making this donation is my parents' salvation [and] my own rebirth in Gokuraku paradise."[36]

[36] Janet Goodwin, *Alms and Vagabonds: Buddhist Temples and Popular Patronage in Medieval Japan,* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 123.

Funerary ceremonies were thus important in the dissemination of Buddhism because through appealing to the mortuary needs of the wealthy Buddhist practitioners were able to secure a necessary role in society. However, direct contact with death still resulted in pollution. Outcasts then, were able to serve the practical needs of the Buddhist monks by handling the dead. Though historians have viewed this relationship as exploitative, further investigation reveals a semi-symbiotic relationship, in which burial associates fought for the *privilege* of control over funerary services of specific temples.

Evidence that this particular privilege was coveted is conveyed in a dispute from 1244. A group of outcasts connected to the Kōfukuji had a dispute with another outcast group connected to Kiyomizu-dera of Kyoto. The burial associates of Kōfukuji argued in the dispute that outcast groups associated with "Kiyomizu-dera belong to a minor branch temple of Kōfukuji. Thus we are *kiyome* directly belonging to the principal temple and are charged with more important duties."[37] This court case demonstrates how by identifying themselves as *kiyome* (purifiers), the outcasts insisted they were of the utmost importance to Kōfukuji and occupied special occupations linked to their defiled status.

One well-known group of *inu-jinin* were employed by Enryakuji, a temple with extended control over shrines within their immediate vicinity, for the purpose of performing funerary rights at Gion Shrine. The group of outcasts was so distinguished that they received an appointment of land near the shrine from Emperor Gosanjō in 1070.[38] Along with assisting the shrine in a funerary capacity, they also performed other tasks deemed undesirable such as cleaning and policing the shrine. In an entry made in

[37] Nagahara Keiji, "The Medieval Origins of the Eta-Hinin," 390.

[38] Suzanne Gay, *The Moneylenders of Late Medieval Kyoto* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 70.

the *Gion shigyō nikki* in 1352, a person named Kenjōbo in the service of Hie Shrine was punished for a crime with the destruction of his home by inu-jinin. Another instance in 1368 when Enryakuji was engaged in a dispute with Nanzenji, the monks gathered together *inu-jinin* of the Kinai provinces as a military enforcement of the temple. In cases where individuals owed taxes to shrines, *inu-jinin* could also act as debt collectors. One infamous tactic of this group was to carry a portable shrine into Kyoto, while simultaneously robbing the homes of debtors.[39] Clearly, the *inu-jinin* of Gion Shrine could be mobilized as a force.

Similarly, in 1441, it was reported that many armed outcasts stood guard as an assassin was paraded down the streets of the capital, to make sure no trouble ensued. Indeed, Keirstead asserts that throughout the medieval period, outcasts were sometimes viewed as policemen.[40] Evidence also suggests outcasts were employed as construction workers by temples. In one instance, the founder of the Saidaiji Ritsu lineage, Eison, gave outcasts construction projects in order to bring them under control.[41]

The variety of tasks performed by *inu-jinin* illuminates the various roles played by the group in religious communities during the medieval period. In most cases, it appears that *inu-jinin* performed secular roles for temples and shrines as funerary assistants, cleaners, debt collectors, police officers, and construction workers. By performing these undesirable tasks, *inu-jinin* were able to garner rewards, such as land, and remain a visible force in medieval society.

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[39] Gay, *The Moneylenders of Late Medieval Kyoto*, 70.

[40] Keirstead, Thomas. "Outcasts before the Law," 282.

[41] David Quinter, "Creating Bodhisattvas Eison, Hinin, and the Living Manjur," 437-440.

Sarugaku Actors

As mentioned previously, outcasts were a varied group. The *Suwa Daimyōjin Ekotoba*, an illustrated scroll from 1356, lists the "animators of shrine festivals as: dancers, *dengaku* performers, magicians, sarugaku actors, beggars, outcasts, blind and sick people." [42] In the list, actors and magicians are connected with defiled persons of society pointing to the tie between these groups. Michael Marra argues that according to the eleventh century *Shin sarugaku ki*, actors dwelled in the areas marked for the destitute people in society such as riverbanks, bridges, slopes, or annexed areas. [43] The status of actors as outcasts seems to be supported by the lodging of actors together with the most defiled persons in society. In his study of *sarugaku* actors, Marra further explains how these actors were used by Buddhist practitioners to act as "pollution dolls" to soak up defilements of the community.[44] In order to draw donation and followers to Buddhism, *sarugaku* performances often accompanied sermons because that made the sermons more entertaining and thus patronized more often. According to Marra, the performance itself functioned not only as amusement attracting patrons, but also as a Buddhist purification ritual, excising defilements of the community by placing those defilements into the physical bodies of the actors. In *nō* theatre, the successor of *sarugaku*, the protagonist of the play portrayed by the outcast actor, shelters the positive aspects of society from negative ones. The performances were intended to preemptively avoid disaster or restore order. In essence, the actors were considered purifiers because they themselves took on the defilements they erased. In this way, outcasts performed both a secular and

[42] Marra, *Representations of Power*, 71.

[43] Marra, *Representations of Power*, 62.

[44] Marra, *Representations of Power*, 67.

soteriological function within Buddhist performances by drawing patrons through entertainment while simultaneously acting as community purifiers. The relationship was not entirely one-sided however, and in exchange for performing, *sarugaku* actors received funds for their services.

Outcasts, in their various occupations as funerary workers, policemen, construction workers and performers, played essential secular and spiritual roles within society. The employment of outcasts by temples allowed the religious institution to attract patrons, through funerary rites and performances, while also allowing the outcast not only a metaphorical place in society, but also job security since these occupations could only be filled by someone of defiled status.

Hinin

Written sources from the medieval period indicate another very different group of outcasts associated with religious sites. In 1158, nobleman Nakayama Tadachika wrote in his diary, "Today I went to pay respects to my ancestors, the *hinin* of Kiyomizu-zaka came begging for rice."[45] Unlike *inu-jinin* and *sarugaku* actors, the occupation of this outcast group was to seek donations from generous patrons of religious institutions while also providing added incentive for piety.

The designation of *hinin* meant non-person and alludes to the status of this group. Scholars of Japanese history have employed the term *hinin* in various ways. All agree that *hinin* were considered defiled by others in society and looked at with some

[45] Nagahara, "The Medieval Origins of the Eta-Hinin," 389.

contempt. One medieval reference book called the *Chiribukuro* explains that *hinin* and other outcast groups "are alike in that they are shunned by human society."[46] Given their similar status, scholars frequently use the term *hinin* as a shorthand for these various types of outcasts.. In his overview of medieval Japan, *The World Turned Upside Down*, Pierre Souyri describes *hinin* as those with leprosy, those who cleaned temples and shrines, and those who were associated with work involving corpses, thus considers *hinin* as essentially equivalent to those working in various "defiled" occupations. [47] While accepting that hinin worked in defiled occupations, Amino Yoshihiko argues that the term hinin did not apply to just any outcast type, but was a term designating only those whose vocation was to purify polluted spaces.[48] In contrast to Souyri and Amino who assert that *hinin* refers to those with defiling vocations, other scholars insist that this fails to capture the complexity of social designations, maintaining that the term *hinin* indicated a very specific group of social outcasts isolated from the community and cast aside due to disease or deformation. In his description of *hinin*, Nagahara explains that those referred to as "kojiki-hinin" were of the lowest social class, physically isolated from their families and communities and therefore excluded from society and economic activities in the medieval period.[49] The term *kojiki* or beggar, suggests that *hinin* elicited donations to support their livelihoods. In another vein, in his examination of both the terms used to designate outcast groups and their social status, Thomas Keirstead argues that scholarship focused on finding distinctions between groups has been largely unproductive due to the

[46] Keirstead, "Outcasts Before the Law," 274.
[47] Pierre Souyri, *The World Turned Upside Down: Medieval Japanese Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 97.

[48] Amino, *Rethinking Japanese History*, 180.

[49] Nagahara, "The Medieval Origins of the Eta-Hinin," 389.

social ambiguities in medieval society; although he too admits *hinin* were a group distinct from other outcast groups such as *kawaramono* and *eta*.[50] He insists that *hinin* were uniquely connected to religious institutions because temples and shrines provided shelter for *hinin* who suffered from a variety of ailments including Hansen's disease.[51]

While it is thus evident that hinin have been assessed from a number of scholarly perspectives, the scholarship does seem to agree on a number of points. Namely, *hinin* did exist as a distinct group, which was relegated to the margins of society, but resided near temples, and whose activities often included begging for donations. In addition, the *hinin* of medieval Japan were frequently those with deforming ailments such as *rai*.

In the pre-modern period, the term *rai*, used today to designate Hansen's disease or leprosy, was used to indicate any number of physically altering ailments including leprosy, and conditions affecting the torso, face, and limbs.[52] Hansen's disease is a particularly visual disease that attacks both the skin and motor skills of victims. If left untreated, Hansen's disease continues to progress, the nerve damage caused by infection becomes permanent leading to loss of tissue and thus deformation of the extremities.[53] Although Hansen's disease appeared physically different depending on the form of it contracted, the disease was not easily hidden. One Buddhist practitioner describes the physical and highly visible effects of rai on the bodies of those who contracted it, writing, "…their limbs are rotting and falling off, and they have no one to treat their ills. The eyes of others are dark and shut tight, and they have no companion to show them the

[50] Keirstead, "Outcasts before the Law," 285.
[51] Keirstead, "Outcasts before the Law," 285.

[52] Andrew Goble, *Confluences of Medicine in Medieval Japan: Buddhist Healing, Chinese Knowledge, Islamic Formulas, and Wounds of War* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011), 67.

[53] WJ Britton and DN Lockwood, "Leprosy," The Lancet 363, no. 9416 (2004): 1209

way…when the search for scraps of cloth in the wilds, their bodies tire and they cannot go on…"[54] The debilitating effects of *rai* as well as the situation of the ill were therefore apparent to members of medieval society. Although treatable today, in the medieval period medical explanations for *rai* were less prevalent than soteriological ones. Like many mysterious phenomena in the medieval period, the explanation for *rai* was relegated to higher powers. During the Kamakura period, both medical and spiritual questions presented by *rai* and other deformities fell into the hands of Buddhist practitioners who were emerging as a class of medical specialists as well as mediators of the divine world.

Before the medieval period, medical knowledge in Japan appears to have been limited. According to Andrew Goble, in his work on medieval medicine and medical practices, in the Heian period, the perceived power of the aristocracy lay in cultural capital.[55] This cultural capital, often in the form of hereditary rights to scarce copies of Chinese classics, meant that knowledge, including medical knowledge, was not openly shared. In addition, Buddhist sects established before the Kamakura period, including the Tendai sect introduced in the eighth century and the Shingon sect established in the ninth century, likewise kept any sort of medical knowledge secret. The only partially extant medical work existing from the period is the *Ishinpō*. This work created by aristocrat Tanba Yasuyori (912-995) in 984, indicates that there were some medical works produced in classical Japan, however, they were limited and highly controlled.[56] As

[54] Eison, "Account of the Origin of *Hannyaji Manjusri*: A Translation of the *Hannyaji Monju Engi*," Trans. David Quinter. *Monumenta Nipponica* 62, no. 4 (2007): 465.

[55] Goble, *Confluences of Medicine*, 27.

[56] Goble, *Confluences of Medicine*, 26-27.

woodblock printing increased accessibility of Chinese texts, Japanese monks travelled to China, collecting readily available Chinese works. Due to these newly accessible Chinese texts as well as patronage by wealthy aristocrats, Buddhist monks became a distinguished authority of healing within medieval communities, frequently working with the ill from all levels of society. Medicine and medical theory, therefore, was interpreted through the lens of Buddhism.

Those with *rai* were painted as inherently transgressive because the gross afflictions and deformities carried by ill individuals were thought to be caused by the accumulation of bad karma.[57] The Buddhist concept of karma, in medieval Japan, affected every individual in society, not simply those with immense wealth or low status. However, since the current situation of any person was informed by the accumulation of karma in this life and past lives, it is not hard to imagine that a particularly wealthy or powerful nobleman could consider himself blessed with positive karma, while someone born into poverty could be conceived as having negative karma. Because damaging karma was a result of past transgressions, outcasts stood out in the medieval imagination as past transgressors, living this life deformed to compensate for crimes committed in a previous life. Given their particularly lowly status, it is apparent how *hinin* were perceived; they could be compensating for some awful, past transgression. However, leprosy belonged to an even more specifically defined category of illnesses brought on by karma: karmic illness.[58]

Buddhist priests examined types of illnesses and those not curable by medical attention tended to be described as karmic in nature. These illnesses were punishment for

[57] Michael Marra, *Representations of Power*, 69

[58] Goble, *Confluences of Medicine*, 77.

particular karmic violations. In the case of leprosy, the Lotus Sutra upholds the idea that transgressions of the past will manifest themselves in the form of disease.[59] *The Encouragement of the Bodhisattva Universally Worthy*, the last chapter of the Lotus Sutra explicates that a person who utters evil of a scripture will contract leprosy or become physically deformed.[60] This negative karma in the form of the physical manifestation of *rai* was outwardly visible to anyone laying eyes on a *hinin*. Therefore, it can be said that *hinin* wore their karma, as plainly as the aristocracy wore their decorated robes.

According to Douglas' "Cultural Theory of Risk," the perception of societal dangers serves the function of perpetuating the existing social order. Douglas argues that actions considered transgressive tend to be associated with societal harm such as illness or famine. Therefore, members of society avoided transgressive behavior, while viewing others who engaged in negative behavior with resentment.[61] In the case of medieval Japan, *hinin* were considered to have performed some transgressive act within society in the past and were karmically compensating for the action with their poverty or illness. Society thus viewed them as transgressors and avoided immoral behavior for fear of becoming them. In this way, temples were able to capitalize on their association with *hinin*. By assuring patrons were frequently exposed to the consequences of transgressive behavior against Buddhist doctrine (i.e. lepers), monks were able to ensure the continued devotion of constituents.

[59] Goble, *Confluences of Medicine*, 66.

[60] Duncan Ryūken Williams, *The Other Side of Zen: A Social History of Sōtō Zen Buddhism in Tokugawa Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 109-110.

[61] Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 40.

While on the surface the nature of the relationship between *hinin* and religious institutions appears relatively biased, through performing these roles, ill people who would otherwise be destitute were able to play a significant soteriological role for Buddhist temples, while also receiving donations for their own subsistence. Furthermore, the view of this relationship as utterly exploitive also fails to acknowledge the emergence of Buddhist figures in the Kamakura period who focused specifically on the salvation of all members of society, including *hinin*. The specific beliefs of these figures and the benefits accrued by *hinin* from their association with these religious communities will be examined in the following chapter. However, of note is the fact that the very ideology that upheld their defiled status also allowed *hinin* to hold a particular soteriological place in the minds of people in medieval society, which allowed them to continue to survive during the turbulent period.

Concluding Thoughts

Outcasts in medieval Japan were a diverse group of individuals, not united by occupation or wealth. Some outcast groups such as *inu-jinin*, *sarugaku* actors, and *hinin* played substantial secular and soteriological roles in religious communities. Through examining the ideology supporting their marginalization and their connection to temples and shrines, it becomes evident that the relationship between religious institutions and outcasts was not simply one of exploitation. *Inu-jinin* functioned as funerary associates as well as a protective force for temples and shrines while gaining special privileges. In exchange for payment, *sarugaku* actors functioned as metaphorical sponges, soaking up the sins of the community in which they performed. Once the ceremony ended, actors

were sent back to their home on riverbanks, where other outcast groups resided, safely away from the newly purified community. The performance also served to enliven sermons, drawing greater numbers of patrons and further expanding Buddhist networks. *Hinin* also served a symbolic function for Buddhist temples during the medieval period. By serving as a reminder of the consequences of karma, the diseased and destitute upheld the ideals of Buddhism and society through a representation of the negative, physical manifestation of transgression. *Hinin*, despite being paraded in front of patrons during ceremonies, were able to support their subsistence through donations given by wealthy patrons.

Since so-called outcasts performed such important roles for religious communities, perhaps, as Keirstead has noted, the term "outcast" fails to capture their status as adequately as historians have assumed. Although outcasts were not associated with the agrarian economy, they were able to secure tasks that allowed them to secure economic viability through their association with temples and shrines. Given their physical presence near temple communities, as well their economic opportunities, these individuals were not "outcasts" so much as they were "liminally central."

CHAPTER III

HININ AND RELIGIOUS SITES

One image from the *Ippen Shōnin Eden*(1229) depicts a community of hovels located off to the side of the road. The shabby shacks contrast sharply with the ornate and elaborate clothing of wealthy patrons making their way to the temple ahead of them (Figure 1). Underneath propped up mats functioning as shelter reside many poorly clad, sun-darkened residents. Most of the inhabitants sit upright, focusing their attention on the many travelers, while others of the shack village lay covered up, a grey color to their faces. This image portrays *hinin*, who as previously mentioned were considered unequal to other humans and were physically marked by deforming ailments called *rai*.

As noted in Chapter One, Nagahara Keiji and Hosokawa Ryōichi assert that outcasts, and particularly *hinin*, were disenfranchised groups, exploited by temples and shrines and marginalized from society.[1] Michael Marra agrees with this assessment, arguing that *hinin* were the pawns of religious institutions, which openly sought to foster contempt for *hinin*.[2] Despite the characterization of abusive relationships between defiled persons and religious communities described by such scholars of medieval Japan, Buddhism was not uniform and different interpretations of Buddhist doctrine envisioned this particular group of *hinin* in a different light than as simply transgressors. Clearly, reality dictates a much more nuanced interpretation of this connection, as images from the *Ippen* scrolls help illuminate.

[1] See chapter one for further details on Nagahara's and Hosokawa's views on outcasts.

[2] Marra, *Representations of Power*, 67.

The scholarship surrounding the emergence of the so-called New Kamakura Buddhism is extensive, and been has re-interpreted in various ways. Japanese scholars such as Ienaga Saburō assert that Buddhism during the Kamakura period can be divided into two categories: old and new.[3] Actions such as easy practice, exclusive practice, and popular salvation define and separate these newly emerging groups from practices of old Buddhism according to Ienaga. Kuroda Toshio, however, reinterpreted this framework postulating that Buddhism in medieval Japan is best envisioned through the dichotomy of orthodox versus heretical.[4] Orthodox sects were those that cooperated with secular authority, such as the imperial court or warrior government, whereas secular powers prosecuted heretical groups. More recent work, such as that by Matsuo Kenji, rejects both these visions of medieval Buddhism, asserting instead that a more appropriate approach is to distinguish sects based on *kansō* monks and *tonseisō* monks.[5] According to Matsuo, Kansō (official) monks worked for the state and their principal responsibility was to pray for harmony. Financed by the state and working to promote peace for everyone, these monks have no financial need to organize lay followers. *Tonseisō* (secluded) monks, on the other hand, were not associated with the state and focused their attention primarily on the salvation of those within society. The term Matsuo uses to describe monks not affiliated with the state, *tonseisō*, works as a blanket category for monks not performing rituals for the state, but were not necessarily secluded. As Matsuo explains, *tonseisō* monks had no option but to seek the patronage of lay followers because donations and

[3] Ienaga Saburō, *Chūsei bukkyō shisōshi* kenkyū (Kyōto: Hōzōkan, 1955).

[4] Kuroda Toshio, *Nihon chūsei no kokka to* shūkyō (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1975).

[5] Kenji Matsuo, "Death and Buddhism in the Japanese Middle Ages: From the Standpoint of the Official Monks/ "Secluded" Monks paradigm of Japanese Buddhism," *The Eastern Buddhist* 41, no. 2 (2010): 79.

alms received were the economic bases for their temples. Such monks preached compassion and the salvation of all people with the acceptance of "other power."

Matsuo's interpretations of new Buddhist thought are easily illustrated through founders of three medieval sects particularly focused on issues of karma: Nichiren (1222-1282), Eison (1201-1290), and Ippen (1234-1289). All three figures engaged in public works projects involving *hinin* and focused specifically on the salvation of all people in the medieval period. They also reimaged the soteriological explanation for deforming ailments. Though the relationship between *hinin* and religious communities associated with more established sects of Buddhism, could be envisioned as exploitative, new sects interpreted karmic illness differently, seeing outcasts as part of each individual's samsaric experience. Residing around religious sites associated with these figures provided *hinin* with means to survive and alleviate their situation in the next life. First, I will examine the writings of these three figures, specifically focusing on their interpretations of *hinin* and karma. Following this, I will examine the relationship between *hinin* and religious sites associated with new religious figures through the images of the *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, revealing the ways in which *hinin* were active agents within the spaces they occupied.

Nichiren

A controversial figure, Nichiren began studying Buddhism at a Tendai school very early in life, but soon denounced Tendai as corrupted by more recent schools of Buddhist thought. After studying at Pure Land, Zen, and Ritsu temples, he determined that the most efficacious Buddhist practice was recitation of and faith in the *Lotus Sutra*. Condemned as an exclusivist, his contempt for the so-called new schools of Buddhism within the medieval period was not secret, and in fact his followers summed up his

feelings for other sects declaring that "Nembutsu leads to Avici Hell, Zen is a devil, and Shingon will destroy the nation, and Ritsu is a traitor."[6] Since this simple practice of belief in the efficacy of the *Lotus Sutra* did not require years of training, Nichiren's self-declared correct form of Buddhism was easily spread to lay followers.[7] He even considered understanding of the *Lotus Sutra* superfluous to hearing the incantation. According to John Brinkman, when questioned about the importance of understanding the *Lotus Sutra*, Nichiren responds:

> Question: If one just hears the *daimoku* of the Lotus Sutra and fails to perceive its meaning or understand the sutra's content, surely one would not escape the three evil ways or could one?
>
> Answer: Born in a land where the Lotus Sutra abounds, when one but hears the sacred name of this sutra one becomes alive to faith. In this lifetime, even an evil person who is thoroughly ignorant will certainly become a believer upon hearing the name of the sutra…"[8]

Clearly, Nichiren placed little stock in complicated practice or rituals associated with other forms of Buddhism.[9] Simple belief in the Lotus Sutra, for Nichiren, meant also the affirmation that every being was endowed with Buddha nature, and consequently even those with the most negative karma could seek enlightenment. For example, Nichiren disregarded medieval literature suggesting women's bodies were impure due to natural bodily processes. When asked by a follower if she should abstain from worship during her time of menstruation, Nichiren answered,

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[6] Jacqueline Stone, "Rebuking the Enemies of the Lotus: Nichirenist Exclusivism in Historical Perspective," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 21, no. 2/3 (1994): 233.

[7] For general information on Nichiren, see John T. Brinkman's "The Simplicity of Nichiren," *Eastern Buddhist* 95, no. 2 (1995): 248-264.

[8] Brinkman, "The Simplicity of Nichiren," 258.

[9] Nichiren subverts Buddhist views of the female body examined in chapter one.

> [M]any women in their prime became nuns and devoted themselves to the Buddha's teachings, but they were never shunned on account of their menstruation period…I would say that menstruation does not represent any kind of impurity coming from an external source. It is simply a characteristic of the female sex, a phenomenon related to the perpetuation of the seed of birth and death.[10]

The practical assessment of the concept of defilement within female bodies also extends to Nichiren's views on social outcasts. Illuminating his understanding of outcasts and their connection to karma, Nichiren tells his personal story of exile in his *Letter from Sado*,

> The persecutions Nichiren has faced are the results of karma formed in previous lifetimes. The "Never disparaging" chapter reads, "when his offenses had been wiped out," indicating that Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was vilified and beaten by countless slanderers of the correct teaching because of his past karma. How much more true this is of Nichiren, who in this life was born poor and lowly to a chandala family…who knows what slander I may have committed in he past?...Perhaps I am descended from those who contemptuously persecuted Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, or am among those who forgot the seeds of enlightenment sown in their lives…it is impossible to fathom one's karma.[11]

This passage reveals two things about Nichiren: (1) He believes that negative karma reflects present terrible circumstances and that even those who are religious leaders such as himself could have committed sins in the past, and (2) Nichiren comes from a *chandala* family, which means he himself grew up in exceedingly low social class. His own experience as a member of an outcast group class is reflected in his compassionate views of, in particular *hinin*. In response to the sudden illness of one of his followers named Ota Jomyo, Nichiren explains the six kinds of diseases focusing his attention on those related to karma,

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[10] Nichiren, *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, trans. The Gosho Translation Committee (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 1999), 303.

[11] Nichiren, *The Writing of Nichiren Daishonin*, 303.

> Illnesses of the sixth, which result from karma, are the most difficult to cure. They vary in severity, and one cannot make any fixed pronouncements, but we know that the gravest illnesses result from the karma create by slandering the Lotus Sutra…Such illnesses can only be cured by the good medicine of the one Buddha Shakyamuni's Lotus Sutra, as that sutra itself explains.[12]

Although Nichiren believed in the karmic nature of certain diseases, he also understood that this kind of disease was not a hindrance to salvation. The route to curing the disease, according to Nichiren, was the Lotus Sutra. Referring to another Tendai monk, Nichiren assures the efficacy of the Lotus Sutra,

> The Great Teacher Ching-his said, "The Nirvana Sutra is saying that [the Lotus Sutra] is the ultimate." He further said: "It is like the case of a person who falls to the ground, but who then pushes himself up from the ground and rises to his feet again. Thus, even though one may slander the correct teaching, one will eventually be saved from the evil paths."[13]

Even after slandering the Lotus Sutra, one may be able to find salvation within the Lotus Sutra. In addition, Nichiren tells the story of Bodhisattva Vasubandhu who at first practiced Hinayana Buddhism and denied the worth of Mahayana Buddhism. Upon encountering Bodhisattva Asanga, Vasubandhu realizes the error of his thinking, praises *Mahayana*, and in repayment for his slander, he offers his tongue to Asanga. The Bodhisattva, stopped Vasubandhu encouraging him to use his tongue to praise Mahayana Buddhism and after writing five hundred treatises praising Mahayana, he was able to eradicate his past transgressions and be reborn in the heaven of the Bodhisattva Maitreya.[14] In this example, Vasubandhu is able to become reborn after slandering Mahayana Buddhism by refuting Hinayana through written word to help spread the

[12] Nichiren, *The Writing of Nichiren Daishonin*, 632. For more on karmic illness, see Goble, *Confluences of Medicine*, 67-88.

[13] Nichiren, *The Writing of Nichiren Daishonin*, 632.

[14] Nichiren, *The Writing of Nichiren Daishonin*, 633.

correct teaching. In a way, Vasubandhu's rebirth in the highly venerated Tusita Heaven is contingent on his repentance for slander. Instead of rejecting individuals from society for committing transgressions such as slander, Nichiren preached that they should not be shunned, but instead be viewed as those capable of achieving salvation.

The Ritsu Sect

Perhaps the most prolific supporters of outcast populations were members of the Ritsu Buddhist sect. Although part of the older traditions of Shingon and Ritsu Buddhism, founder Eison drastically changed the nature of the sect combining Shingo Esotericism, the *vinaya*, and charity.[15] Although scholars have questioned his motives, Eison focused the charity of his sect toward *hinin*, providing them with food, clothing, and other useful daily items.[16] Along with providing material goods to *hinin*, Eison also offered compassion toward the bereft in society, envisioning beggars as the reincarnation of the Monju Bodhisattva.

In his autobiography *Kongō Busshi Eison Kanjin Gakushōki*, Eison explains the meaning behind the Manjusri Parinirvana Sutra and how it upholds the notion that Manjusri, known as Monju in Japan, assumed the form of an outcast,

> In short the Manjusri Sutra states, 'The Buddha proclaimed to the Bhadrapala: "The Dharma-Prince Manjustri turns into an impoverished, solitary, or afflicted sentient being and appears before practitioners. When people call to mind Manjusri, they should practice compassion….To promote compassion, Manjusri

[15] Quinter, "Creating Bodhisattvas: Eison, Hinin, and the Living Manjur," 438.

[16] Goble, *Confluences of Medicine*, 16-17.

> appears in the form of a suffering being. This is the basis for the origins of such charitable acts.[17]

Undoubtedly, Eison envisioned *hinin* as the physical representation of the Bodhisattva Monju and advocated that compassion and charity were the appropriate response to karmic illness. Eison even had an image of Monju made and installed at the a temple right outside of Nara in 1269, devoting the image to the salvation of hinin as well as calling for a general assembly in which all patrons including hinin were to worship together.[18]

However, Hosokawa argues that even in veneration of *hinin* as representations of Manjusri, Buddhist monks continue to discriminate against this outcast group and further perpetuate their low position in society.[19] Hosokawa explains that although activity involved in charitable works towards *hinin,* Eison cared little about the salvation of *hinin* because he saw outcasts as divine only within the context of the ritual of assembly. Therefore, all charitable works directed at hinin were merely ceremonial.[20] Hosokawa advocates the view that Eison believed *hinin* lacked 'nature,' meaning they were unable to study or practice Buddhism. Essentially, without nature, they had no ability to escape the cycle of re-birth through the study of Buddhism.[21]

However, according to scholar David Quinter, Eison's relief efforts were not simply ritual. In examination of Eison's texts devoted to the *Monju Bodhisattva, the Hannyaji monju engi* (1267) and the *Hannyaji monju bosatsu zō zōryū gammon* (1269),

[17] Quinter, "Creating Bodhisattvas," 441.

[18] Quinter, "Creating Bodhisattvas," 442.

[19] Ryōichi Hosokawa, *Chūsei no mibunsei to hinin* (Tokyo: Nihon Edita Sukuru Shuppanbu, 1994): 22-30.

[20] Hosokawa, *Chūsei no mibunsei to hinin*, 29.

[21] Quinter, "Creating Bodhisattvas," 457.

Quinter determines that Eison's denunciations of ill and poor as transgressors responsible for their own karmic conditions, was merely part of a larger trend within *Mahayana* scriptures, which simultaneously preach compassion for the destitute as well as condemnation for their past sins.[22] Quinter emphasizes that although in Eison's eyes, outcasts were very much in need of repentance, Eison equally saw all members of society in need of penitence, and the veneration of Manjusri was a universal means of enlightenment.[23] Quinter further explains that Eison and others from the Ritsu sect constructed shelters and medical facilities for destitute outcasts, showing an ongoing commitment to their care. One example of such a medical facility is that found in *Gokurakuji,* founded by one of Eison's disciples, Ninshō. As Andrew Goble describes, through his headship of the temple, Ninshō created the most extensive medical facility in the pre-modern era.[24] Including a treatment clinic, as well as lodging for those with *rai,* contemporary statistics maintain that 57, 250 people with *rai* were treated in Gokurakuji within a 34 year period.[25]

This very engagement in medical treatment by Ritsu sect priests, as Goble explains, significantly altered views of karmic illness in general as exemplified by physicians and Ritsu sect Buddhist, Kajiwara Shōzen. In his early work, *Ton'isho* (1304), Shōzen found that some varieties of *rai* previously considered karmic and therefore untreatable, were in fact able to be treated. He explains, "As to *rai* illness, there are twelve varieties, of which four are said to be a karmic illness. They cannot be treated at

[22] Quinter, "Creating Bodhisattvas," 457.

[23] Quinter, "Creating Bodhisattvas," 458.

[24] Goble, *Confluences of Medicine,* 19.

[25] Goble, *Confluences of Medicine,* 19.

all…[26] As is evident, Shōzen disproved the general karmic nature of *rai* insisting that only a couple varieties were considered karmic illness. However, in his later work, *Man'anpō* (1327-28) he disavowed his original assessment indicating a new theory on the nature of *rai* illness: that it was caused by a combination of wind and worms.[27] According to Goble, by defining the causes of *rai*, Shōzen unmistakably rejected the idea of *rai* being karmic in nature. By denying the karmic nature of *rai*, Shōzen implicitly rejected the notion that *hinin* were particularly heinous transgressors.

Ippen

The man who came to be known as Ippen and founder of the *Ji* sect of Buddhism, was born from a disenfranchised samurai family, and therefore he was compelled to take the tonsure at an early age. The sources left that help piece together Ippen's life consist of poems, chants, letters, and two illustrated biographies, which disciples compiled following his death. Although any conclusion readers draw from these sparse records will inevitably be incomplete, there are some concrete facts they illuminate. After several years of Buddhist study, he was unenlightened by his Tendai teachings and he decided to abandon Buddhism for family life. However, once he learned of the power of the Amida Buddha and the *nembutsu*, he was convinced to recommit himself to Buddhism.[28] This time around, Ippen appears to have been more invested, giving up his family to become a

[26] Goble, *Confluences of Medicine,* 76.

[27] Goble, *Confluences of Medicine,* 87.

[28] The *nembutsu* is defined as the evocation of the name of the Amida Buddha.

homeless wanderer, proselytizing to all groups in society at Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines.[29]

Due to the uncomplicated nature of Pure Land practice, that is the recitation of the *nembutsu*, even commoners with busy schedules were able to practice this less time-consuming form of the Buddhist faith. Ippen's name indicates his philosophy surrounding the nembutsu. *Ippen* literally means "once," referring to the belief in salvation after only one single statement of "Namu-amida-butsu."[30] In his hymn, *A Gist in Empty Words*, he also provokes compassion for all in society by reinforcing the non-duality of followers and other beings. He writes,

> In the space of vast kalpas and countless lives,
> Every being has been our mother and father;
> We must take all sentient beings as companions, then.
> And quickly attain the Pure Land.[31]

Ippen indicated in practical language that each being was connected to one another while also being created by one another. Essentially, without all other beings, the individual does not exist. By breaking down distinctions between people, *Ippen* promoted compassion through identification with every being. Considering the misfortune of others appears to have been deemed indispensable for the *nembutsu* practice according to his *Precepts for the Nembutsu Practicer* (1286),

> With wholeness of heart
> Give rise to compassion;
> Do not be forgetful of others' sorrow.[32]

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[29] Laura S. Kaufman, "Ippen Hijiri- E: Artistic and Literary Sources in a Buddhist Handscroll Painting of Thirteenth-Century Japan," (PhD diss., New York University, 1980), 1-20.

[30] Dennis Hirota, *No Abode: The Record of Ippen*, (Kyoto: Ryukoku University Press, 1986), 16.

[31] Hirota, *No Abode*, 68.

[32] Hirota, *No Abode*, 76.

Ippen considered compassion toward others as essential to practicing the *nembutsu*. Pure Land Buddhism and Ippen asserted that anyone who puts faith in the Amida Buddha regardless of place in society could be reborn after death in paradise.[33] Even evil karma was not considered a hindrance to achieving happiness. His words, collected by his disciples, illuminate his opinion towards karmic illness,

> Further he said:
>
> One utterance of Amida Buddha's Name
> Immediately eradicates incalculable karmic evil;
> In the present life you receive incomparable happiness,
> And afterwards you are born into the Land of Purity.
>
> People ordinarily consider "incomparable happiness" to mean worldly joys, but it does not. It is happiness free of desire...In the span of our transmigration in birth-and-death through countless lives in many states of existence, we have experienced all things, and have passed on and come to the present.[34]

As this selection suggests, just one recitation of the *nembutsu* would free any individual, no matter what their karmic burden, and would ensure rebirth in Pure Land. However, he also insisted that each person has experienced all things, or all states during the span of their transmigration. By considering karmic illness part of every individual's experience, he rejected notions that those considered karmically ill were separate from other individuals. The only cure for karmic evils, or the unhappiness in this life, was the utterance of the Amida Buddha's name and the acceptance of salvation in the Name. Therefore, Ippen looked at outcasts with compassion while recognizing the ability of even these groups to seek salvation of the Amida Buddha. Patrons donated to Ippen and

[33] Kaufman, "Ippen Hijiri-E," 20.

[34] Hirota, *No Abode*, 159.

his followers who, in turn, used and collected alms to provide *hinin* with clothes and food.[35]

Charity work with *hinin* naturally meant that Ippen would frequently be in the vicinity of outcasts. The physical proximity is verified by the visual sources depicting Ippen's life. Disciple and possible family member, Shōkai, compiled the *Ippen Shōnin Eden* (*The Illustrated Scroll of Saint Ippen*) in 1299 to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Ippen's death through the remembrance of his life. The twelve scrolls serve as a biography of Ippen and depict images followed by commentary of important events.[36] As Laura Kaufman explains in her work on the scrolls, the imagery is executed in a style of precise realism, meaning all aspects of real-life scenery were meant to be depicted, even the *hinin* who Ippen provided with charity.[37] An exploration of *hinin* depicted in the scrolls reveals that *hinin* remained physically separated from other religious followers, but not completely isolated, as they were able to extract donations from wealthy patrons. Although there are few references to this outcast group within the text of the scrolls, one can imagine that Shōkai intended to depict the marginal within the scrolls because he wanted to provide an accurate portrayal of the areas that Ippen

[35] Goble, *Confluences of Medicine,* 15.

[36] Kaufman, "Ippen Hijiri-E," 20.

[37] Numerous scholars have utilized pictures scrolls to evaluate specific details about society. For a recent example, see Thomas Conlan's *In Need of Divine Intervention: Takezake Suenaga's Scrolls of the Mongol Invasions of Japan* (Ithica, N.Y.: East Asian Program, Cornell University, 2001). In his work, Conlan utilizes the images of the picture scroll to recreate the poorly documented Mongol Invasions of Japan as well as offer valuable insight into the physical appearance of warriors in the thirteenth century. To prove his service and therefore receive rewards of the *bakufu* for participating in the invasions, Takezake Suenaga created his picture scrolls. If the scrolls looked unrealistic, the *bakufu* would not believe he was involved in the battles. Thus, due to the purpose of the scroll, it is a reliable source. Although Shōkai was no warrior, he too wished to share his product with others who would be aware of Ippen's world. Meant to celebrate Ippen's life and death, the scrolls were painted in a realistic style.

occupied.[38] Furthermore, Shōkai was close to Ippen and was his contemporary, and therefore he was able to depict Ippen in a world that was not foreign to him. Different kinds of people from all social classes are depicted along with their daily activities. Although a number of scholars have focused on the *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, very few have addressed the over eighty depictions of the destitute persons featured in the scrolls. One of the rare scholars to examine outcasts within the scrolls is Amino Yoshihiko.

In his evaluation of the outcasts within the scrolls, Amino focuses his attention on reactions of various outcast groups to Ippen's death depicted in scroll twelve of the *Eden*. In one image, a *hinin* with his face covered in a scarf lays down in a river, hands together in prayer, waiting for the current to carry him off.[39] According to Amino, this depiction following the death of Ippen illuminates the deep attachment of outcasts to the holy man. In another scene, Amino observes the appearance of *hinin* around the deathbed of Ippen, moving seamlessly through groups of non-afflicted commoners.[40] He concludes that images such as these portray the affiliation of *hinin* with other religious practitioners, who seemingly do not mind mingling with the outcasts, particularly in times of mourning. Although *hinin* were relegated to the margins of most images from the scrolls, Amino's observations highlight the willingness of Ippen's followers to acknowledge and interact with *hinin* populations. The scrolls also highlight the actions of *hinin* who capitalized on this collaboration with religious practitioners near shrines and temples. *Hinin* strategically picked locations near religious sites in order to have access to donations, food, and care of religious patrons. In this way, the scrolls portray the semi-

[38] Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, ed. Shigemi Komatsu (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1988), 196.

[39] Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, 333.

[40] Amino, *Rethinking Japanese History*, 202.

symbiotic nature of the relationship between *hinin* and religious communities, as well as the individual lives of these marginalized figures including their physical appearance, their homes and possessions, and rhythms of their daily interactions.

Images from the Ippen Shōnin Eden (1299)

Finding those afflicted with karmic illness within the many images of the *Ippen Shōnin Eden* is not particularly difficult as the fair majority of outcasts depicted have a darker complexion than other commoners portrayed in scenes. Frequently the poorly clad *hinin* wore scarves wrapped around their faces to hide or protect any particularly gross affliction. As mentioned previously, *rai* was a highly visible disease and by covering the face, deformations or wounds, though apparent, would not dominate temple patrons' sight. The portrayal of *hinin* correspond to other depictions of karmically ill during the period. One image from the *Gross Scroll of Afflictions* (c. twelfth and thirteenth centuries), portrays a bustling scene of activity around a bridge (Figure 2).[41] A warrior riding a horse approaches the bridge followed by two retainers holding spears. On the other side of the bridge a curious peasant carrying various wares over his shoulder watches as a crouching woman extends her clutched hand toward a dark-skinned figure sitting on a straw mat under a tree. The dark figure holds out a bowl with one hand, while clasping his leg with another. He sits huddled, his back bent. Looking up at the woman, his deformed face shows no sign of expression. This scene portrays a beggar, seeking donations from various passersby. His deformed face marks him as a sufferer of *rai*. With

[41] *Scrolls of Gross Afflictions*, G35, See Goble "Images of Illness: Interpreting the Medieval *Scrolls of Afflictions* ," in *Currents in Medieval Japanese History: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey P. Mass* (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2009): 163-216.

an unwrapped scarf, begging bowl, and nondescript clothing, this image of the defiled is mirrored in Shōkai's compilation.

In another scene off to the side of a shrine near Kasate, several decrepit figures occupy a small community of makeshift shacks (Figure 3).[42] The scene is one of action as the occupants try to shoo away crows encircling a severely malnourished man. One of the figures wears a wrap around his face as he watches a procession of monks pass by. Other figures wear similar scarves, although their faces are not covered. Instead, their faces are exposed, revealing deformities. The men possession scarves are consistent with images from the *Gross Scroll of Afflictions*, marking them as *hinin*.

In the scene near Ichihime Shrine sits two *hinin* seemingly wearing their shoes on their hands (Figure 4). [43] The two *hinin* rest on their hands, facing each other in mid-conversation. Sporting casual expression, both members of the marginalized community appear to be going about the day in normal fashion, indicating that the use of their arms, instead of their legs was of no particular concern. Although open to interpretation, this image indicates the loss of ambulatory functions.[44] In addition, an image in scroll nine depicting a place near Ueno, shows another *hinin* who appears to have lost the use of his arms.[45] Clearly, the kinds of illness contracted by *hinin* were highly visible but not limited to Hansen's disease.

Further images illuminate the differences in appearance between outcasts and other religious practitioners. In front of the gate to Sekidera affluent supporters, while

[42] Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*,, 163.

[43] Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, 196.

[44] See Goble, "Images of Illness," 163-216.

[45] Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, 238-239.

chatting among themselves, filter through a gate. Ornately dressed women and aristocratic males hurry through the temple entrance (Figure 5). [46] The images of these prosperous Pure Land believers contrasts with the common citizens who both watch the festivities and go about their daily lives. One farmer in plain grey clothing pushes along his bull, which pulls a cart filled with objects resembling bales of hay. Distinguishing among the different classes of supporters then, is not a difficult task, although at many sites where religious ceremonies are taking place within the scroll, commoner, and aristocrat seemingly mingle together.

What is perhaps most striking about the shrines and temples depicted in the scrolls are the rows of shacks occupying the fringes of the image, for these dwellings are literally and figuratively located on the margins. The shacks are often depicted as darker in color, and as smaller than other structures within the scrolls. The temporary shelters seem to be made of mats that, in other images, *hinin* also used as blankets or for protection from the sun. Furthermore, these shacks appear to be impermanent structures that are easily set up, and therefore easily taken apart. Arm extended, a white clad official, face awash with disdain, chases the *hinin* population from his city in preparation for the visit of an important guest (Figure 6).[47] In his right hand, a stick-like instrument is gripped, ready to be utilized against any lingering undesirables. Disorder captures the scene as one outcast, while running, drops his possessions, including his mat and shelter material. Other members of the outcast community carry the mats rolled up on their backs, keeping their improvised shelter with them at all times. Clearly, welcome could be revoked at any time, which meant that *hinin* had to be prepared to leave any location at

[46] Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, 179.

[47] Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, 141.

any given moment. This mobile lifestyle also meant that *hinin* could only afford to carry essential daily items, such as cooking utensils and begging bowls. The image also reveals that the *hinin* were never officially invited to stay in that particular area. Instead, they sought out their own locations to set up communities. However, when choosing a location, it appears that *hinin* were very specific about where they decided to stay as another image from scroll seven portrays.

As described previously, in scroll seven (Figure 1), off to the side of the busy roadway, one sun-darkened man raises a bowl in his hands, extending it out toward a group of colorfully dressed female passerby, begging for charity. This particular scene illustrates the type of patron likely to donate to *hinin,* while also demonstrating the relationship between the karmically ill and religious sites and communities in medieval Japan. The location of the shack community was chosen based on its proximity to the road pilgrims must walk to meet Ippen. *Hinin* appealed to religious pilgrims specifically, knowing that those seeking the sermons of a figure such as Ippen, were likely to be charitable. Ahead on the road is a Mima Shrine where Ippen has traveled to spread his teaching. Wealthy patrons, such as the woman stopped by the *hinin,* flocked to these sites to meet the holy man, as further images depict.

Wealthier patrons provided *hinin* with charity. However, Ippen's direct entourage also supplied food to *hinin*. One scene depicts the distribution of food by Ippen's disciples at a shrine near Taimadera in Nara (Figures 7 and 8).[48] As commoners carry rice over their heads and in wooden boxes secured over their shoulder by a stick, monks residing in the nearby structure vigorously cook and distribute food to various peoples within the scene. One woman walks along the edge of the shrine, reaching out to accept a

[48] Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, 230-231.

bowl of rice handed over by one of the monk-cooks. On the margins of the scene, partially covered by bushes, one sun-darkened man wolfs down a bowl of rice. Although there are very few depictions of *hinin* receiving substance from the monks, this image shows one of the many advantages of being located near a religious institution.

In the image depicting Ueno, various people filter toward a shrine to see Ippen (Figure 9).[49] Up at the right corner of the image, erected *hinin* shelters house several outcasts ducking under mats to protect them from the beaming sun. Off to the right hand side of the shelters sits another *hinin* with a wrap around his head. Arms resting gently at his sides, he looks forward at a commoner who holds a bowl to his lips. Although the image does not immediately explain why the *hinin* is not able to feed himself, it is clear that he is being cared for by the commoner. The scene reveals that another reason to reside near religious site was the added care received from charitable religious patrons.

Images from the Ippen scrolls reveal the daily interactions and lives of *hinin*. Frequently physically located on the margins of religious sites such as temples and shrines, *hinin* shelters were temporary, able to be moved easily if *hinin* were asked to leave, or independently sought to relocate. *Hinin* might decide to change locations based on the possibility for donations, food, or care offered up by charitable pilgrims. Due to their physical condition and lack of resources, securing aid from other sources was necessary for *hinin* to survive.

[49] Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, 238-239.

Concluding Thoughts

In the past scholars have painted *hinin* as simply outcasts, marginalized from society, used by religious institutions, and unable to exert agency over their own lives.[50] This viewpoint partly comes from prominent Buddhist ideologies, which painted *hinin* as transgressors. As mentioned previously, Buddhist practitioners thought that the misfortunes of *hinin*, represented as disabilities and gross afflictions, were caused by sins committed against others or against the doctrines of Buddhism. Due to their karmic illness, *hinin* were able to serve a symbolic role within religious communities because they functioned as physical manifestations of the repercussions of disobeying doctrine. However, because new salvation oriented Buddhist sects emerged during the medieval period, this simplistic relationship of exploitation fails to encapsulate the full extent of the connection between religious sites and the karmically ill.

As Nichiren, Eison, and Ippen articulate in their writings, *hinin* were not to be considered simply defiled trangressors who needed to compensate for past sins. Instead, they were to be viewed as a part of oneself or as related to divinity. In the minds of Buddhist practitioners of the so-called new Kamakura Buddhism then, in their past lives they too probably suffered with defilement. By seeing *hinin* as simply an extension of oneself, these religious figures denied an exploitative relationship between outcasts and religious sites. Although motives for charitable donations and understandings of soteriological ideas are difficult to determine, it is evident that those spreading new teachings promoted compassion, not contempt, for *hinin*.

Hinin were in a particularly dire situation, searching for subsistence from charitable persons in society. As desperate as the circumstances may have been, *hinin*

[50] See Introduction and Chapter one for more details.

still played an active role in their own lives, looking to garner money, food, and care from religious patrons. Their ability to move from one location to another easily also meant they could dynamically seek out different locations better suited to find the charity they needed. Therefore, the affiliation between *hinin* and temples or shrines was a survival strategy for *hinin* who subsisted from the aid they received. Certainly, administrators in temples or shrines also benefitted from this relationship, but deeming it unilaterally exploitative fails to capture the nuance of Buddhism as well as fails to acknowledge the agency of *hinin* as highlighted through the images of the *Ippen Shōnin Eden.*

One final image from the scrolls, depicts Ippen painting at Ten Shrine (Figure 10).[51] *Hinin* shelters line the gate to the structure, as a few straggling patrons make their way to see the holy man. At the entrance of the gate two masked *hinin* sit bowls resting in front of them, waiting for charitable donations. Opposite these figures toward the bottom of the image, three people sit around what appears to be a cooking pot, waiting for the food to be ready. The group consists of a young boy, an elderly person, and a woman. Although residing among the *hinin* shelters, none of the three individuals appears deformed or dons scarves around their faces. Although speculative, the three individuals in this image do not appear to be outcasts, but instead look like a family. This image could be alluding to the tremendous upheaval that was taking place in society. Faced with repeated famine, illness, and warfare, the commoner population was also in need of charity.

[51] Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, 298.

CHAPTER IV

THREATS TO COMMONER SURVIVAL IN EARLY MEDIEVAL JAPAN

In hopes of promoting and spreading belief in the efficacy of the Lotus Sutra, the unconventional yet determined Nichiren wrote and submitted his *On Establishing the Correct Teaching and for the Peace of the Land* to Hōjō Tokiyori through the offices of a powerful official of the Kamakura Shogunate and later Nichiren sect convert, Yadoya Mitsunori. Tokiyori, although retired, still held important sway in the decisions of his reigning warrior family.[1] Meant to explain the connection between the false teachings of Hōnen's Pure Land sect and the recent calamities befalling the realm, Nichiren's treatise explained how by failing to follow the doctrines of the Lotus Sutra, seven disasters would fall upon a kingdom. According to the exposition, five of these catastrophes had already occurred in Japan: disease, strange occurrences in constellations, eclipses, and unseasonable winds and rains. [2] Given these inauspicious signs, Nichiren warned that the next two cataclysms, including invasion by a foreign enemy and interior revolt, were just the next link in a series of events that would bring the bakufu to its knees.

Describing thirteenth century Japan, Nichiren wrote in the form of a conversation between a host and a traveler. The wanderer said,

> In recent years, there have been unusual disturbances in the heavens and strange occurrences on earth, famine and pestilence, all affecting every corner of the empire and spreading throughout the land…Over half the population has already

[1] Nichiren. *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, 9.

[2] Nichiren. *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, 9.

> been carried off by death, and there is hardly a single person who does not grieve…Famines and epidemics rage more fiercely than ever, beggars are everywhere in sight, and scenes of death fill our eyes. Corpses pile up in mounds like observation platforms, and dead bodies lie side by side like planks on a bridge.[3]

Although it is easy to imagine that Nichiren exaggerated this account to emphasize his message, other sources indicate that his description of conditions was not very far from reality. The medieval period was plagued with disease, unusual natural disasters and weather patterns, famine, and warfare. Although these phenomena held particular concern for all members of society, for those in the lowest classes of the commoner population, these conditions proved to be extensively detrimental. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, commoners faced considerable obstacles in their daily lives, which traditional subsistence methods could not solve. In order to protect their livelihoods and lives, medieval peasants reacted to their conditions, and created strategies for survival.

Before considering survival strategies, I will first define what I mean when I use the terms commoner and peasant, taking into account the different designations of commoners identified by scholars of the medieval period. Next, I will discuss mortality factors such as disease, famine, and warfare over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the reactions of lower-class commoners to these mortality factors.

Medieval "Peasants": The Problematic Term of Hyakushō and Defining Social Groups

Considerable scholarly debate surrounds the issue of what constituted a medieval commoner. Most historians agree that when approaching the subject of the social

[3] Nichiren. *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, 6

organization of medieval Japan, an important place to begin is with the *shōen* estate system, which emerged in the early eleventh and twelfth centuries. Amino Yoshihiko has argued that this system is better defined as the Shōen Estate/Governmental Lands System, since *shōen* refers to a private estate, and it has been well documented that government lands still existed during the medieval period.[4] These lands worked as units for the collection of taxes, and did not reflect the actual organization of the land, which was divided into administrative districts.[5] Groups working within the *shōen* and governmental lands are generally categorized as *hyakushō*, which in modern Japanese indicates farmer. Based on comparisons with the medieval period in western society and a definition seemingly attached to agrarianism, historians tend to envision *hyakushō* in terms of European peasantry.[6] However, as Amino and other scholars have noted, the term *hyakushō* had various meaning prior to the modern period. The term literally means, "[members of] the hundred surnames" and therefore indicated those in society who had not obtained the fifth court rank and were obliged to pay taxes.[7] Consequently, *hyakushō* did not refer simply to farmers, but anyone working within estates, including those who did not produce agricultural product.[8] Records from Niimi Estate in Bitchū province indicate that commoner populations made their livelihoods not by agriculture, but

[4] Amino, Yoshihiko, *Rethinking Japanese History*, 65.

[5] Amino, Yoshihiko, *Rethinking Japanese History*, 65.

[6] Thomas Conlan, *State of War: The violent Order of Fourteenth Century Japan*(Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2003), 107.

[7] Conlan, *State of War*, 108.

[8] Conlan, *State of War*, 6.

through metallurgy, paper working, and lacquer extraction.[9] In some cases, as Thomas Conlan points out is his examination of warfare in the fourteenth century, *hyakushō* could also be synonymous with affluent, local, public office holding members of estates.[10] Therefore, when considering the term *hyakushō*, it would be best to envision it as a 'catch-all' for medieval commoners not associated with segments of the aristocratic, warrior, or outcast population.

Further, it is clear, based on the economic activities of peasants, that agriculture did not define the lives of many people residing in estates. Therefore, when referring to villages or the rural countryside, I will not be focusing specifically on agricultural communities, although it should be noted that many peasants did still pay taxes with agricultural products.[11] In addition, since *hyakushō* remains a problematic term, for the purposes of this project, I will be referring to agrarian and non-agrarian members of the commoner population as peasants or commoners. I will also be considering members of the peasant population that focused primarily on production within the estate, and not wealthy members of estates who engaged in tax collection.

Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century Japan

The peasants of medieval Japan faced considerable challenges to their survival in the first half of the medieval period. Natural disasters, disease, famine, and war divested peasants of their property, family, and lives. Although these incidents had ramifications

[9] Amino, *Rethinking Japanese History*, 69-73.

[10] Conlan, *State of War*, 108-109.

[11] Nagahara Keiji, "The Medieval Peasant," in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, edited by John Whitney Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 302-303.

for the elite members of society, for low-class peasants, it could amount to death of self or family. Looking at how particular phenomena affected the peasant population, I will examine natural disasters and climate, famine, illness, and warfare separately, and then consider how these mortality factors interacted together within the context of the thirteenth and fourteenth century.

Natural Disasters and Unusual Weather Patterns

In the early medieval period, major natural disasters as well as unusual weather patterns caused considerable damage to lands and structures in both the towns and countryside. Written sources from the period, as well as recent environmental analyses, indicate that during the twelfth century a significant weather change took place, which directly affected the medieval population. Natural disasters caused substantial destruction, while unusual weather threatened subsistence.

Existing on a dynamic convergence zone of four lithospheric plates, seismic activity within Japan is unsurprisingly high. Even the earliest records, such as the *Nihon Shoki*, indicate the frequency of earthquakes and other natural phenomena such as tsunamis and volcanic activity. Certainly, earthquakes were not new or uncommon phenomena, however one major earthquake striking the home of the emperor caused literate elites to take notice. From his vantage point located just outside the capital city of Kyoto, the reclusive Buddhist practitioner Kamo-no-Chōmei was able to reflect on the occurrences in this world. Within his short discourse, *The Ten Foot Square Hut*, Chōmei records strange happenings that have occurred within the period,

> Then in the second year of the era Genryaku (1184) there was a great earthquake. And this was no ordinary one. The hills crumbled down and filled the rivers, and the sea surged up and overwhelmed the land…What wonder that in the capital, of

> all the temples, monasteries, pagodas and mausoleums, there should not be one that remained undamaged. Some crumbled to pieces and some were thrown down, while the dust rose in clouds like smoke around them, and the sound of the falling buildings was like thunder. [12]

The earthquake transformed the natural landscape and destroyed buildings in the immediate area. Other sources from the period such as the *Heike Monogatari* corroborate the destructive earthquake, which according to Chōmei produced aftershocks that lasted for three months following the event.[13] The *Heike* details the ways in which the destructive earthquake affected the commoner population. According to the second chapter of the seventh volume, entitled *The Great Earthquake* the destruction wrought by the earthquake was egalitarian since "the Imperial Palace and the various shrines and temples to the houses of common people, all were destroyed."[14] Extensive damage left some peasants homeless. The account also indicates that this was not a concentrated destruction. The story explains that "the provinces both far and near were equally affected."[15] The earthquake's impact extended beyond the immediate province to even more remote areas. This particularly devastating earthquake, however, was only one of six major earthquakes that occurred during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[16] The

[12] *The Ten Foot Square Hut, And Tales of the Heike; Being Two Thirteenth Century Japanese Classics, "The Hojoki" and Selections from "The Heike Monogatari,"* Trans. A. L. Sadler (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1970), 9.

[13] *The Ten Foot Square Hut*, 12.

[14] *The Ten Foot Square Hut* , 280-281.

[15] *The Ten Foot Square Hut*, 280-281.

[16] International Institute of Seismology and Earthquake Engineering, http://iisee.kenken.go.jp/cgi-bin/utsu/result_eng.cgi

years 1247, 1257, 1293, 1331, 1360, and 1361, each experienced an earthquake with a magnitude of seven or more.[17]

The psychological impact of large natural disasters was another issue addressed by the *Heike monogatari*, which illuminates the ways in which people responded emotionally to the general devastation of the quake. Following the earthquake, the story tells, "Old and young went in fear and trembling, and the palace officials were at their wits' end…now high and low shut themselves into their houses, thinking the world was coming to an end.[18] Fear drives most people, regardless of social station, to stay confined to their home.[19]

Along with seismic activity, directly following the beginning of the tenth century, researchers have determined that the earth underwent a three to four hundred year period of warming known as the Medieval Warm Period.[20] This warming period was immediately followed by a cooling period often referred to as the Little Ice Age. Distorted weather throughout the northern hemisphere attracted the notation of medieval elites. In his diary *Meigetsuki*, Fujiwara Teika notes that messengers from all over mentioned the increasingly cold weather.[21] In his reflections, Chōmei describes the bizarre weather patterns pervasive during his lifetime explaining "in the era Yōwa ... The

[17] International Institute of Seismology and Earthquake Engineering

[18] *Ten Foot Square Hut*, 281.

[19] Due to the connection between natural phenomena and *kami*, medieval peasants considered natural disasters to be caused by supernatural forces reacting to the offensive actions of the population. Buddhist thinkers also envisioned the destructive forces of nature as a sign of the degeneration of the dharma such as Nichiren as exemplified by his description of disease and famine in the previously mentioned discourse.

[20] Shusaku Goto and others, "Climatic and environmental changes at southeastern coast of Lake Biwa over past 3000 years, inferred from borehole temperature data," Physics of the Earth and Planetary Interiors 152, no.4 (2005): 314-315.

[21] Isogai Fujio, "*Kangi no kikin to Jyōkyu shikimoku no seiritsu*," *Rekishi to chiri* 276 (1978): 5-6.

spring and summer were scorching hot, and autumn and winter brought typhoons and floods, and as one bad season followed another." [22]

Accounts further corroborate the unusual weather patterns during the period such as strong winds, rains, and hail.[23] According to Chōmei, in 1175 and 1181, great typhoons blew so hard, that they caused substantial destruction. He wrote,

> In the third year of the era Angen (1175)…the wind blew a gale, and at the hour of the Dog (8 pm) a fire started in the south-east of the Capital and was blown across to the northwest. And everything as far as the Shujaku Gate, the Diakyoku Hall and the Office of Internal Affairs…was reduced to ashes in a single night...Of the Palaces of the Great Noble sixteen were entirely destroyed, and of the house of lesser people the number is unknown.[24]

In this case, strong winds more than likely began, and then quickly spread a fire strong enough to obliterate large and small structures alike. However, the physical devastation wrought by the wind and flame was not limited to buildings. Chōmei explains that of those who fell victim to the fire, "some fell chocked in the smoke, while others were overtaken by the flames and perished suddenly…many thousands must have perished."[25] Clearly, disasters like this did not occur every day, but it was also not as uncommon as one might imagine. According to Chōmei, just six years later, another typhoon leveled an entire neighborhood, "and of the houses within its reach there were none, great or small, that it did not throw down."[26] This sort of catastrophe therefore, was rare, but not an experience so infrequent that people would go a lifetime without

[22] *The Ten Foot Square Hut*, 6.

[23] Farris, *Japan's Medieval Population*, 34.

[24] *The Ten Foot Square Hut*, 2-3.

[25] *The Ten Foot Square Hut*, 2-3.

[26] *The Ten Foot Square Hut*, 2-3.

suffering from a disaster and therefore a lack of shelter and suddenly deceased loved-ones.

The strange weather had even further repercussions for the medieval population, in the form of drought and excessive rains. Too much rain during the winter and too little rain during the summer caused substantial sustenance problems for the population because as Chōmei wrote, " the Five Cereals could not ripen. In vain was the spring ploughing, and the summer sowing was but labor lost. Neither did you hear the joyous clamor of the harvest and storing in autumn and winter."[27]

Natural disasters and repeated excessive weather repeatedly destroyed homes and lives within the entirety of the medieval population. Although presumably all victims have the same chance of escaping a fire or having their home destroyed in an earthquake, the devastating effects of unusual weather had particular repercussions for the lower classes in society. Without homes and food, there was a significant potential for succumbing to exposure, but an even higher possibility of death from starvation.

Famine

In one image from the late Heian period, a peasant man carries his wares across the marshy land on a rod placed over his shoulder (Figure 1). Besides the burden he bears, the man seems nonchalant as he goes about his task. But he is not alone. By his right foot, a large, deformed, grey-skinned creature reaches for his leg. With a pronounced, protruding stomach and long, almost skeletal arms, the alarming creature is practically double the size of the man. An inch at most separates the creature's hand from

[27] *The Ten Foot Square Hut*, 6.

the man's leg, and yet, the peasant looks straight ahead, taking no notice of the monster by his side.

This strange image is from the *Scroll of Hungry Ghosts* and the huge emaciated creature depicted is just one of many of the numerous depictions of hungry ghosts or *gaki*. Invisible to humans, the *gaki* depicted are the spirits of greedy or jealous individuals karmically punished for their covetous thoughts with perpetual hunger for bodily excretions such as urine or feces. Although the scrolls provided a visual representation of punishments for the peasant population, according to historian William LaFleur, compilers of the scroll might have based these depictions on real life images of those dying from starvation.[28] The protrusions of the stomach, the red-tinted hair, as well as the greying of the skin, are all genuine symptoms of starvation. In this light, our image appears significantly different. Instead of an invisible monster attacking a man, we have a disfigured and suffering human reaching out for humanity.

These images and historical evidence suggest that famine was a considerable problem during the early medieval period. In fact, sources indicate that there were at least four widespread, protracted famines, which accounted for significant loss of life for society.[29] In his analysis of mortality in the medieval period, William Farris determines that while the Yōwa, Kangi, Shōka famines were responsible for high mortality rates in the period between 1150-1280, there were also several local famines, which devastated

[28] William LaFleur, "*Hungry Ghosts* and Hungry People: Somaticity and Rationality in *Medieval Japan*," in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body, Part One*. ed. Michael Feher (New York: Zone Publications, 1989), 270-303.

[29] Farris, *Japan's Medieval Population*, 33-59.

specific areas. The fourteenth century also experienced thirteen widespread famines and dozens of local famines.[30]

One account of the effects of famine on the medieval commoner population comes from the *Taiheiki*. The author noted,

> "In the summer of Genkō, a terrible drought dried up the earth, withering the land of the home provinces, where the young green shoots were wont to grow. The fields overflowed with the bodies of those who starved, and men fell down to the ground from hunger. It was in that year that people gave three hundred coins for a half a bushel of millet. [31]

Due to drought, there were food shortages, which in turn led to the high cost of food, and people unable to feed themselves died. However, sources indicate that despite the immense hardship, commoners employed various activities to procure food during times of famine. Writing of the Yōwa famine (1180-1182) Chōmei penned,

> "in the era Yōwa, I think it was…there were two years of famine, and a terrible time indeed it was…And since everything the people of the capital had to depend on the country around it, when no farmers came in with food how could they continue their usual existence?...Beggars filled the streets and their clamour was deafening ears... respectable citizens who ordinarily wore hats and shoes now went barefooted begging from house to house. And while you looked in wonder at such as sight they would suddenly fall down and die in the road. And by the walls and in the highways you could see everywhere the bodies of all those who had died of starvation.[32]

Without supplies coming into the capital due to poor harvests, town dwellers begged for sustenance. If they were unable to elicit charity, their fate was death, as Chōmei reminds readers. Rural residents also tried to procure sustenance from their surroundings. Chōmei wrote, "As for the poor laborers and woodcutters and such like, they could cut no more firewood and there was none to help them, they broke up their

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[30] Farris, *Japan's Medieval Population*, 106.

[31] *The Taiheiki: A Chronicle of Medieval Japan*, trans. Helen Craig McCullough (New York: Tuttle Publishing, 1959): 6.

[32] *The Ten Foot Square Hut*, 6-7.

own cottages and took the pieces into the city to sell."[33] Those in the country flocked to the city to exchange what goods they had for food. If however, food was scarce everywhere including the capital, what alternatives were available for the commoner population? One Kamakura law promulgated during a famine in 1259 provides insight into the matter. It states,

> Concerning stopping the nuisances in the mountains, fields, riverbanks and shorelines, and providing assistance to save the lives of the *rōnin* (drifters)
>
> It has been reported that since there is famine nationwide there are people near and far who are impoverished. They enter either the mountains and fields to take *jyoyo* and *tokoro* or the riverbanks and shorelines seeking fish scraps and seaweed.[34] They engage in these activities to keep themselves alive. However, the local jitō harshly represses this activity. Immediately, the *jito's* interdictions are to cease, and he shall help save the lives of the ronin. However, this directive should not be used as an excuse for providing excessive amounts. Know this fact, and attend to the matter. Pursuant to shogunal order, conveyed as above. [35]

The regulation suggests those not attached to any particular plot of land looked to collect food from various places during famine, but the jitō suppressed this activity extremely harshly. Begging, collecting scraps for sale, and foraging, were all methods employed by divested commoners during times of famine caused by unusual weather or disaster. One other response to famine was the sale of oneself or one's relatives into servitude, which the next chapter will discuss at length.

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[33] *The Ten Foot Square Hut*, 7-8.

[34] *Joyo* translates to Japanese yam, while *tokoro* translates to a species of wild yam. Farris translates this article slightly differently, insisting that the word ki'rin, (which I translate to mean fish scraps), as simply fish. See Farris, 55.

[35] Shin'ichi Satō, *Chūsei hōsei shiryō shū* (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1969), 88. Doc. #323.

Illness

According to *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Medicine*, during Japan's so-called "Age of Plagues" (700-1050), the archipelago experienced 119 separate epidemics.[36] In comparison to this staggering figure, the number of outbreaks of disease in the medieval period appear relatively small. However, despite the decrease in epidemics, disease and illness continued to be a consistent element in medieval life. The three illnesses responsible for the most death in medieval Japan include smallpox, measles, and influenza. Any medical attention available was sparse and effectiveness of treatment varied considerably depending on illness and physician. This combination of outbreaks and infrequent medical attention continued to be a substantial challenge for the medieval population.

In Farris' investigation of medieval epidemics, he notes twelve smallpox outbreaks before the thirteenth century, and five within the fourteenth century.[37] In addition, the population suffered from influenza and measles outbreaks, which occurred sporadically, but would probably have been experienced at least once in the span of a medieval lifetime.[38] Given the frequency of epidemics as well as the growing prevalence of *rai* previously discussed, it comes as no surprise that members of medieval society would be captivated with illness. *Scroll of Afflictions,* the late twelfth-century compilation, portrays different illnesses through twenty-two scenes depicting people who

[36] Roy Porter, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 26.

[37] Farris, *Japan's Medieval Population* 27 and 100.

[38] Farris, *Japan's Medieval Population*, 27 and 100.

have contracted various ailments.[39] Although the nature of these scroll seems to have been to capture strange afflictions (such as an albinism), there also appear to be common conditions depicted such as crab lice and insomnia.[40] The purpose of the scroll remains debated, but it is evident from the type of project (visual depictions), that it was meant to be viewed by others also interested in afflictions of the populace. According to Goble in his investigation of the *Scrolls of Afflictions,* life in pre-modern Japan was defined not by health and wellness, but by illness.

As previously discussed, aristocrats prior to the medieval period did not consider themselves obligated to spread medical knowledge for the benefit of the entire public. Instead, they were extremely secretive with their previous acquired medical texts, using them as cultural capital to help maintain the status of their lineage. Early physicians that appear in the written record were hereditary, aristocratic, specialists such as the Tanba and Wake families that were employed by the imperial court and the bakufu.[41]

However, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Buddhist medical practitioners treated the public and worked to disseminate medical knowledge among the populace. One example of this kind of medieval physician is Kajiwara Shozen, who, as noted earlier, treated patients at the Ritsu sect's expansive medical facility within Gokurakuji. As Goble notes, sources from the period indicate that over the course of thirty-four years, Buddhist physicians at Gokurakuji treated roughly 90,000 people.[42] Even taking into account other medical facilities available, if the population during this

[39] Goble, "Images of Illness," 163-216.
[40] Goble, "Images of Illness," 168.

[41] Andrew Goble, "War and Injury: The Emergence of Wound Medicine in Medieval Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica* 60, no. 3 (2005): 300.

[42] Goble, *Confluences of Medicine*, 19.

thirty-four year period was between 5.7 and 9 million, as some scholars suggest, then those with access to facilities still represented a small percentage of the population.[43] In addition to treatment, Shōzen wrote *the Ton'ishō (1304)* in Japanese instead of Chinese, the written language of the elite. He explained his motive for using colloquial Japanese when he wrote, "my aim in writing in phonetic syllabary is to make things widely known to people and to help everyone in the realm. The average physician either focuses on profit and conceals things which are not difficult, or else out of self-interest keeps secret those things which are of benefit."[44] From my previous analysis of the charitable actions of the Ritsu sect, these sentiments should not be surprising. However, despite these attempts to treat individuals and to pass along knowledge to the benefit of all, effective medical attention remained uncommon for medieval Japanese society. Instead, the commoner population relied mainly upon each other for medical treatment. As the *Scroll of Afflictions* and a later image collection of illness, the *Scroll of Gross Afflictions* illustrate, when members of the community became ill, their families usually cared for them. Goble notes that in one scene of a woman suffering from *kakuran*, a nearby female tends to her. The woman attending her appears slightly older and possibly a relative of the ill woman. However, regardless of her relation to the young lady what appears evident is that she is not a medical practitioner, but instead another woman attendant. This image and others from the scrolls indicate that when medical attention could not be acquired (since it was particularly sparse), medieval commoners relied on each other.

Epidemic disease and other maladies coupled with a lack of access to medical knowledge and treatment meant that illness was a significant challenging feature of

[43] Farris, *Japan's Medieval Population*, 262.

[44] Goble, *Confluences of Medicine*, XVIII.

medieval life. Although the number of outbreaks decline from the classical period, this does not mean it was not a regular and formidable occurrence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Warfare

Deaths from disasters, famine, and illness were exacerbated by the escalation of warfare in the fourteenth century. With the exceptions of the Genpei and Jōkyū Wars, as well as the Mongol Invasions, the thirteenth century was a period of relative peace. However, a myriad of factors combined to cause the collapse of the Kamakura Bakufu and the introduction of endemic warfare throughout the archipelago. Recurrent warfare had serious repercussions for the medieval peasantry. Large mobile armies devastated the countryside by procuring supplies, employing scorched-earth tactics, and inflicting general terror on the peasantry. Before turning to the Genkō War (1331-1333), which opened the Muromachi period with violence and destruction, I will examine the effects of warfare on the peasantry in the thirteenth century. Historians have researched the many battles and skirmishes that occurred during the early medieval period. For the purposes of this project, I will focus on the Jōkyū War, and the Genkō War in particular to examine the ways in which civil war could devastate the population.

After being declared an outlaw bound for execution by the imperial court and retired-emperor Go-Toba, Hōjō Yoshitoki (1163-1224), regent and advisor to the shogun, marshaled his forces, and the eastern provinces rose up in rebellion, attacking the capital city. This marked the beginning of the Jōkyū War of 1221. When the eastern armies arrived at Kyoto, defeating many imperial opponents along the way, an overwhelmed Go

Toba watched as the vassals of Kamakura quickly annihilated their opposition and occupied the city. In the aftermath, Yoshitoki exiled Go-Toba and his sons, including the reigning emperor, to Oki and placed Emperor Go-Horikawa on the throne. The most extensive, remaining texts that chronicle the war are the *Jōkyūki* and the *Azuma Kagami*. The *Jōkyūki* is essentially a semi-fictional war tale, while *Azuma Kagami* is the chronicle of the Kamakura shogunate by bakufu officials.[45] Although both records, as historical sources, have to be approached cautiously, they generally corroborate each other and they give at least an approximation of generally what ensued during the disturbance. In addition to describing the actions of heroic individuals such as Hōjō Yasutoki and Go Toba, both accounts mention the frustrations of the common people and therefore, at least minimally, illuminate the ways in which war affected their lives.

As the *bakufu* raised its eastern armies, one warrior told Hōjō Masako of the capital where fires burned substantial parts of the city following the battles between court and Kamakura warrior officials. He explains, "[Iga Mitsusue's] house had been set on fire, and the smoke from it spread for dozens of blocks, blown by such a strong south wind."[46] In addition, fires consumed other areas of the city as well, causing the emperor to take refuge from the flames, which threatened Kan'in Imperial palace.[47] Although fires could begin accidentally, *Azuma Kagami* indicates that setting fires to hinder an enemy within the city was a common occurrence. Toward the end of the war, when court warriors were defeated and retreating, eastern warriors "set fire to the commoners'

[45] William McCullough, "The *Azuma Kagami* Account of the *Shōkyū* War," *Monumenta Nipponica*, 23, no. 1/2 (1968): 102.

[46] McCullough, "The *Azuma Kagami* Account of the *Shōkyū* War," 109.

[47] McCullough, "The *Azuma Kagami* Account of the *Shōkyū* War, 109.

houses north of the river and the fugitives who had taken refuge in them were soon coughing in the smoke and running frantically about."[48] As the account mentions, the houses of the commoner population around the city were an easy target to create confusion. Another example comes from the *Jōkyūki*, when aristocratic warriors hatch a plot to thwart one of the armies of Kamakura led by Tōtōmi Inosuke and push on to reach Kamakura,

> When Tōtōmi Inosuke has been killed, we can push through Takase and Miyaji, and the plains of Honno and Otowa in Mikawa province and strike down Yasutoki and Tokifusa at the Hashimoto post station. From there we can go on to slay Yoshitoki in Kamakura. Then [leave] the Seven Valley Villages of that city enveloped in a crimson haze of flame.[49]

In this scene, burning of homes and other structures is logical, but consideration for the commoner population does not hinder the conscience of at least some warriors. Farris argues that one overriding rule for warriors in the medieval period was *jiriki kyūsai*, which he translates to "aid by one's own power."[50] Under this practice, warriors could appropriate whatever supplies they needed from the most convenient location, even if it was the innocent commoner population. In the case of these warriors, the supply they needed was fuel for their fire in the form of homes. Homes were also appropriated another way when, according to the bakufu's account of the incident, Yasutoki uses a raft made from the torn down houses of the commoners, to cross a river. [51] Violence around

[48] McCullough, "The *Azuma Kagami* Account of the *Shōkyū* War, 129.

[49] William McCullough, "Shokyuki: An Account of the Shokyu War of 1221," *Monumenta Nipponica* 19, no. ½, (1964): 192.

[50] Farris, *Japan's Medieval Population*, 63.

[51] McCullough, "The *Azuma Kagami* Account of the *Shōkyū* War," 129.

the capital must have been particularly jolting to the commoner population as the account explains when a fire spread throughout the homes of warriors,

> As the flames spread, bringing destruction in their wake, the despairing and bewildered townsfolk ran wildly in all directions, afraid to live and afraid to die like people ravaged by Chi'in Hsiang…In the villages where the courts men had lived, not a house was left whole; in their tilled fields, not a sprout remained.[52]

The allusion is to the infamous Chinese general Xiang Yu, who was known for sacking and burning cities he captured. Clearly, the populations within the area surrounding and within the capital, according to the author of this account, were decimated. Although commoners suffered during the Jōkyū Disturbance, the thirteenth century was relatively peaceful militarily. In contrast, the fourteenth century introduced endemic warfare to medieval commoners.

Warfare expanded in the medieval period with the intermittent fighting between the Northern and Southern courts. Warfare became widespread and more intense during the fourteenth century as massive armies fought throughout every season across large expanses of land.[53] One significant departure from warfare of the previous century was the introduction of siege warfare, which had substantial consequences for the medieval population. The most extensive record of war during this period is the *Taiheiki*, which falls under the category of *gunki monogatari*, or war tales. Although the author takes liberty with dates and the specificities of events, in general the author captures the contours of war.

According to the *Taiheiki*, the attitude of medieval warriors had not changed dramatically since the Jōkyū War and commoners possessions were up for grabs when

[52] McCullough, "The *Azuma Kagami* Account of the *Shōkyū* War," 131.

[53] Goble, "War and Injury," 297.

warriors were short. In one instance, a messenger reported that Kusunoki Masashige raised an army for the imperial cause, and "laid requisitions upon the commoners of the provinces, carrying away their food for his warriors to eat."[54] Frequently, during the war campaigns of the period, warrior leaders stretched resources, which he was responsible for supplying to his followers. In his study of warfare in the fourteenth century, Thomas Conlan explains how military campaigns were expensive endeavors, which required the procurement of supplies through payments or plunder.[55]

As forces began constructing humble fortifications to defend their own territory or have a defendable position in hostile land, the surrounding villages and fields were extorted for resources.[56] During the siege of Akasaka Castle in 1333, according to the *Taiheiki*, after being slightly thwarted by Masashige, who was held up in the fortification, a group of eastern warriors devised a plan,

> Let us remain awhile in this place, that led by men acquainted with the home provinces we may cut down trees on the mountains, burn houses, and guard thereby against warriors waiting in reserve to fall on us. Then may we attack the castle with tranquil spirits.[57]

This episode illuminates the motivation and destruction of invading armies. Certainly, it was a military advantage to destroy or appropriate resources from the land such as trees or possible dwellings, in order to keep those supplies away from fortified enemies. The lack of supplies led the castle dwelling forces to act. In the case of Masashige, a lack of food compelled him to attempt an escape from the castle, which

[54] *The Taiheiki*, 75.

[55] Conlan, *State of War*, 83-106.

[56] Conlan, *State of War*, 101.

[57] *The Taiheiki*, 87.

almost resulted in his death.[58] In another case, a defensive army burned houses in a five-mile perimeter surrounding their fortifications so that attacking armies could not easily hide.[59] This scorched-earth tactic devastated the land as one pilgrim to the Ise Shrine notes on his travels in 1342,

> It is very evident how terribly the southern part of this province has been devastated through the chaotic state of the country of recent years…when we approach we see no inhabitants…and when we asked a passerby about it he said it was just a place where there had been rice-fields before; and I thought how sad it was that things had come to pass.[60]

Occasionally, the commoners were themselves the supplies needed by the fourteenth century army. The author of the *Taiheiki* commented in regards to warriors acquiring awards following battle writing, "Yet not so many of the enemy had been struck down. Some among them were merely heads brought forth by Rokuhara warriors who had not joined in the fighting, but sought to gain honor for themselves: heads of commoners from the capital and other places, labeled with divers name."[61] Commoners in the wrong place at the wrong time could find themselves victim of a warrior who sought rewards in exchange for fighting, which never actually took place. In another instance, Kantō warrior Utsunomiya amassed an army of followers to pursue Masashige's army. The account explains that as these warrior rode forward to join Utsunomiya, "spoiled passers-by of their horses, even such as were of powerful families; likewise,

[58] *The Taiheki*, 90-91.
[59] Conlan, *State of War*, 103.

[60] Saka, *The Ise Daijingū Sankeiki*, trans. A.L. Sadler (Tōkyō: The Meiji Japan Society, 1940), 29-30.

[61] *The Taihekei*, 214.

they took away commoners to labor for them. So that travelers traveled by roundabout ways and village folk closed their doors."[62]

Warfare affected the lives of villagers throughout the archipelago, as warriors extracted food and other resources, including commoner labor, toward their aim of military victory. In the thirteenth century, warfare was not nearly as frequent as the pervasive warfare of the fourteenth century. In any one day However, in both centuries, when necessary, military leaders appropriated resources from commoner populations without compensation or concern for the general population.

Warfare alone would have been destructive for population, but combined with epidemics and famine, very frequently, the commoner population was devastated. For example, the Genpei War coincided with widespread famine, earthquakes, and disease. According to Chōmei, disease too battered the population during the Genpei War, pestilence following poor weather in 1181.[63] Similarly, the outset of the Genkō War in 1331 concurred with local famines and an earthquake in modern day Nara and Wakayama prefectures.[64] The interaction of all these elements represented death and loss of property for the commoner population.

Although a popular response to violence by the commoner population was flight, the growth of nucleated villages and village consciousness emerged partly as a reaction to endemic warfare.[65]As Kristina Troost describes in her work concerning the growth of

[62] *The Taiheiki,* 157.
[63] *The Ten Foot Square Hut*, 6.

[64] International Institute of Seismology and Earthquake Engineering, http://iisee.kenken.go.jp

[65] Farris, *Japan's Medieval Population*, 118-127.

villages in the fourteenth century, agricultural innovations culminated in population growth, which resulted in nucleated villages.[66] However, due to competition over resources, such as roaming armies, peasants banded together to protect their space and engage in disputes with warriors. As Troost explains, working together increased chances of success.[67]

Concluding Thoughts

During the early medieval period, the population of Japan suffered from natural disasters, famine, illness, and endemic warfare. As one can image, the effect of these phenomena on an individual was determined by access to resources. Wealthier individuals could sustain a famine in which a half a bushel of millet cost three hundred coins. Those less fortunate, however, had to find other ways to survive outbreaks, earthquakes, and roaming armies. Those suffering from famine foraged, sold their homes, and begged for charity in order to survive. During epidemics, medieval commoners had the option to seek medical help if they dwelled near a Buddhist medical facility. If no medical help could be attained, family members or colleagues took care of the ill. Villagers pillaged by armies during the fourteenth century banded together to form nucleated villages, in hope of safety in numbers. Clearly, commoners employed a variety of strategies to combat the challenges faced during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In the next chapter, I will focus on one very specific reaction to challenges faced by the commoner population: indentured servitude. Selling oneself or relatives into

[66] Kristina Troost, "Peasants, Elites, and Villages." In *The Origins of Japan's Medieval World*: *Courtiers, Clerics, Warriors and Peasants in the Fourteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 92-96.
[67] Troost, "Peasants, Elites, and Villages*,"* 99.

servitude seems like a drastic measure, but apparently occurred frequently enough for the *bakufu* to respond.

CHAPTER V

SLAVES AND SERVITUDE

When Hōjō Yasutoki promulgated his Jōei Formulary in 1232, he created a living law code, which allowed *bakufu* leaders of the future to add supplementary enactments in response to pressing issues of their times. By the close of the Kamakura period, the additional laws created by successive generations of Hōjō amounted to six times the size of the original code.[1] The supplemental laws addressed any number of problems the *bakufu* encountered, including the interaction between warriors and other members of society. In exchange for protection of their rights to property, vassals were to adhere to the judicial system and laws added to the Formulary following creation were generally in response to cases brought by various plaintiffs before the Shogunate. Therefore, these laws give insight into prevalent issues of the period. One such matter that appears multiple times within the regulations is the rights of people within society classified as servants or slaves (奴婢 nuhi).

Early scholars of Japanese history, such as Araki Moriaki, once envisioned Japan as a slave-ridden society, in which almost every person was subjected to some form of exploitation at the hands of the wealthy.[2] However, these views on status and exploitation in Japan have slowly been revised over the course of the twentieth century, as historians have noted the different social status of various groups contained in the commoner

[1] John Carey Hall, *Japanese Feudal Law* (Washington: University Publications of America, 1979), 3-4.

[2] See Araki Moriaki, *Bukuhan taisei shakai no seiritsu to kōzō* (Tōkyō: Ochanomizu Shobō, 1959).

population.[3] Slave, as a social designation, however, did exist in medieval Japan. Since slaves did not produce their own records, evidence as to their lives remains scarce. However, laws issued by the Kamakura *bakufu* concerning slaves and servants provide at least some understanding of the system of slavery, circumstances regarding the proliferation of this group, and the abuses suffered by slaves and servants at the hands of Kamakura vassals.[4] In his analysis, Wayne Farris examines servitude in society through the lens of greedy samurai whose policy of *jiriki kyūsai* (self-help) forced peasants into service including through conscription and destruction of their livelihood.[5] In the most comprehensive English work on slavery in the medieval period, Thomas Nelson examines both international slave trade and domestic slavery, determining that Japan was involved in a thriving global network of slave trade, while simultaneously an internal and less systematize organization of slaves existed in the archipelago.

Expanding on the work of previous historians, in this chapter, I will examine the lives of slaves and servants through Kamakura law revealing indentured servitude as a strategy utilized by commoners to assuage suffering caused by considerable challenges explored in the previous chapter. In contrast to the usual images or perceptions of slavery, we find that in Japan, at least during the Kamakura period on which I am focusing, although indeed some commoners were seized and forced into servitude, many *nuhi* and *genin* were commoners who sold either themselves or their relatives into servitude in order to protect their lives. Furthermore, the *bakufu* recognized this tactic for survival,

[3] See Nagahara, "The Medieval Peasant," 303- 306.

[4] See Thomas Nelson, "Slavery In Medieval Japan," 463-492. Also see Farris, *Japan's Medieval Population*, 46-51.

[5] Nelson, "Slavery In Medieval Japan," 56-66.

and took measures to ensure the system worked to benefit the commoner population, not to enrich already wealthy elites.

International Slavery in the Medieval Period

The term slavery is evocative, and for those living in western countries, it evokes a particular set of circumstances such as involuntary capture and exploitation of a particular group. Perhaps this explains why so few western historians have examined slavery in Japanese history. However, as Nelson has examined, international slave trade partially thrived during the medieval period. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries *wakō* engaged in the confiscation of people from both Korea and China, who upon capture became slaves.[6] Although typically imagined to be Japanese pirates, the majority of *wakō* were actually Chinese and primarily smuggled goods out of the restricted Ming Empire.[7] However, some Japanese were *wakō* as is evident from Korean envoys which indicated that most *wakō* activity was centered around Matsura, Tsushima, and the island of Iki.[8] Furthermore, European visitors to the Japanese archipelago frequently engaged in the trafficking of Japanese slaves in the second half of the fifteenth century. In his textbook for Japanese seminaries, Portuguese Jesuit Alessandro Valignano describes the reaction of traveling Japanese Christians to the number of slaves they found in en route to Portugal in 1582:

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[6] Nelson, "Slavery In Medieval Japan," 470.

[7] See Kwan-Wai So, *Japanese Piracy in the Ming China during the Sixteenth Century* (East Lancing: Michigan State University, 1975).

[8] Hyungsub Moon, "The Matsura Pirate-Warriors of Northwestern Kyushu in the Kamakura Age," *in Currents in Medieval Japanese History: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey P. Mass*, edited by Gordon Berger and Andrew Goble (Los Angeles: Figueroa, 2009), 371-372.

> During our travels to divers parts, we have seen our countrymen sold and reduced to slavery. We could not help but burn with anger at our own people, who, oblivious to all piety, have sold of people of their own blood and tongue at such a low price just as if they were cattle or sheep.[9]

Chinese sources further corroborate the trade of Japanese slaves to Portuguese settlements. Due to increased piracy in the late medieval and early modern periods, China ended formal ties with Japan, but allowed Portuguese to act as intermediaries trading between the two countries.[10] However, Chinese officials seemingly saw the accumulation of Japanese slaves as a threat to national security and in 1613 demanded the Portuguese immediately halt purchasing Japanese.[11]

Portuguese authorities condoned legal purchases of slaves, but admonished against illegal capture and use of humans. In 1605, King Philip of Spain and Portugal issued a proclamation that insisted that slaves be legally confiscated, and that Japanese confiscated illegally be allowed to seek justice.[12] Jesuit missionaries aware of the actions of their countrymen, however, found the activities to be abhorrent, and held a conference in 1598 to discuss the issue. According to Nelson, the consensus of this meeting was that Japanese slaves within their own country were treated better than those trafficked abroad:

> The Portuguese excuse their behavior saying that they have legally purchased the Koreans or Japanese and so freed them from a worse form of slavery and guaranteed them a better one. In reality this is not true because the Japanese give better treatment to people they own as slaves and indeed treat them as their own children.[13]

[9] Nelson, "Slavery In Medieval Japan," 464.

[10] Nelson, "Slavery In Medieval Japan," 469.

[11] Nelson, "Slavery In Medieval Japan," 469.

[12] Nelson, "Slavery In Medieval Japan," 464.

[13] Nelson, "Slavery In Medieval Japan," 468.

The statement that Japanese slaves were better off within their own society raises considerable questions as to the state of slavery in Japan. Within the early medieval period, slavery appears to be domestic, and served a Japanese master not far removed from their area of birth. An investigation of Kamakura laws reveals also that many bound in servitude were not seized by greedy elites, but instead voluntarily entered into contracted servitude with a master.

Slaves and Kamakura Law

The very first mention of slaves in Kamakura law is in article 41 of the *Goseibai Shikimoku*, which outlines the regulations regarding cases brought before the bakufu:

> Concerning slaves (*nuhi)* and other miscellaneous types (zōnin),
>
> Following precedent set by the house of the Great General, if ten years have passed, there will be no judgment on the matter. Next, with respect to the children produced, although there are provisions that deal with this matter, following the precedents set down by the founding shogun, boys will be attached to the father and girls should be attached to mothers.[14]

If disputes brought before the *bakufu* concerning *nuhi* dated back ten years or more, then the *bakufu* would not hear the case. Although it is speculation, imposing the statute of limitation was more than likely an attempt to limit the amount of false or excessive cases brought by owners of slaves who would seemingly have petitioned the court much earlier concerning their confiscated slaves if the case was legitimate or dire. The underlying implication of this article is that there existed consistent trading of persons. If *nuhi* produced children, the parents must have been residing in the same location. Slaves continuing to reside in the same location could take care of children together. Only if they were separated by sale, would there need to be concern regarding

[14] Hōjō Yasutoki, *Goseibai shikimoku* (Tōkyō: Koten Hozonkai, 1930), 30.

who was responsible to take care of children produced. Article 41 in isolation, would seem to indicate that slavery was legal during the Kamakura period. However further supplemental laws indicate that slavery was technically illegal. Still, the enforcement of these laws were left the discretion of the *bakufu*. A proclamation by the Shogunate in 1239 states,

> Concerning the buying and selling of humans[15]
>
> The prohibition for the offense [of buying and selling humans] is severe. However, in the time of the Great Famine, frequently people sold family members and underlings or themselves to the service of a wealthy household to save their lives. As a matter of lenience, the Bakufu remained silent on the matter. Nonetheless, in recent year, miscellaneous people have sued and judgment of their cases is troublesome. In sum, regarding litigation concerning the arrangements that were made during the Kangi famine, and prior to the fourth month of the first year of the Enō period, if the plaintiff and defendant are both people under the jurisdiction of Kyoto, then it is not possible for *bushi* to interfere. In the case of issues involving Kanto *gokenin* and Kyoto families, it is ordered that warrior laws are to be followed. As a rule, hereafter, the buying and selling of people is to be completely prohibited. Pursuant to the order of the Shogun, so it is conveyed.[16]

As the article shows, during the three years of the Kangi famine (1229-1232) and several recovery years following, various common people sold themselves, their relatives, and their retainers into slavery in exchange for sustenance. Not only would an amount be given to the seller, but also presumably whoever now owned the sold individual would be responsible for feeding and providing shelter for that individual. In this way, the common populations of Japan created a strategy for survival. There was no certainty that a new owner would fulfill this obligation, but the promise of reprieve from daily struggles was impetus enough for the sale. According to one account from the

[15] The term I translate to buying and selling of people is 人倫売買.

[16] Shin'ichi Satō, *Chūsei hōsei shiryō shū* (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1969), 88. Doc. #114.

twelfth century *Senjōshū* people living in one coastal town in Echigo barely survived day to day, and cried for joy when they were purchased in the morning market.[17] Instead of punishing those suffering, the *bakufu* permitted the buying and selling of humans.

The *bakufu* considered the dates that slaves could be attain legally to be from the beginning of the Kangi famine (1229) to the first law enacted prohibiting the buying and selling of people (1239). This is not the only article to make special note of the famine as the impetus for slavery. The Kangi famine mentioned in the article above took a significant toll on the medieval population. Even elite members in society noted the deleterious effects of the three-year famine. A minor noble residing in Kyoto wrote in 1231, "This year the entire realm was stricken with famine; the people have been wiped out."[18] The bakufu's decision not to enforce existing laws during the famine was a matter of compassion toward people of the realm. The lack of enforcement allowed those starving or lacking shelter to enter a contractual agreement with a wealthy household. Also of note is the distinction made between the "families of Kyoto" and "*gokenin*."

This refers directly to the ambiguity of the roles of the dual polities existing in Kyoto and Kamakura. When promulgated, the *Goseibai Shikimoku* was intended to run parallel with the already existing laws of the court, not supersede them. However, the *bakufu* subsumed the authority of the court in judicial matters and although imperial legislation continued, the power to enforce regulations lay in the hands of warriors.[19] One example of the bakufu's authority extending over the imperial courts was when Kōfukuji

[17] Nelson, "Slavery In Medieval Japan," 477.

[18] Farris, *Japan's Medieval Population*, 37.

[19] Cornelius Kiley, "The Imperial Court as a Legal Authority in Kamakura Japan," in *Court and Bakufu in Japan: Essays in Kamakura History*, ed. Jeffrey Mass (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 36.

and Iwashimizu Shrine disputed designated water rights in two *shōen*. The court attempted to handle the situation and ruled in favor of Iwashimizu, even granting the shrine compensatory rights.[20] Priests from Kōfukuji protested raucously enough to raise the guard of an official who called in *bakufu* warriors to quell the situation. A fight ensued and the soldiers killed priests. Although the *bakufu* did not overturn the ruling, following this skirmish, the warrior government sent a directive to the Court, which asserted terms of a settlement the Court was to impose and chided the Court for punishing the warriors. When the bakufu was at odds with the courts decisions, the authority of the bakufu extended over the Court. In this case because the warrior government had the ability to physically enforce their directives, the court had no option but to uphold the bakufu's decision. After all, who else would protect the aristocracy from the priest soldiers?

By 1240, the problem of human trafficking had not been solved, and another decree was issued to the *shugo* of Izumo province:

> Concerning the ban on the buying and selling of humans
>
> Both the generations-old trafficking laws of the Court and directives of Kanto were both clearly layed down over one another. However, during the time of the Kangi famine, people supported their lives by either selling off offspring or disposing of retainers. The bakufu remained silent because if [trafficking] was prohibited, it would cause the lamentation of the people. It is said that even after this world has recovered, various people surreptitiously violate these laws. This is exceedingly unjustified. Hereafter, human trafficking should be stopped immediately. As in the order conveyed on the 20th day of the sixth month of the Enō era, "Bulletins should be erected in market places and in your courtyard, and this proclamation should circulate throughout the realm." If, furthermore, the people do not adhere to this, you are to report their whereabouts and names. [21]

[20] Kiley, "The Imperial Court as a Legal Authority in Kamakura Japan," 36.

[21] Shin'ichi Satō, *Chūsei hōsei shiryō shū* (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1969), 121. Doc. #142.

The *shugo* was responsible for the policing of the entire province and therefore the duty of enforcing the prohibition of human trafficking fell into his hands.[22] As before, the prohibition was to be posted and circulated throughout the realm, and any people found violating the law were to be reported to Kanto. However, months later, Bakufu leaders were ready to supply incentive to obey the prohibition:

> Regarding the buying and selling of humans
>
> People aware of the buying and selling of humans as well as those directly involved in the transactions shall be sent to Kanto. With respect to those being sold, whenever encountering such people, they are to be released. Moreover, this is to be made known along roadways and at barriers.[23]

Presumably, human trafficking was not occurring in the open market since by law the activity was prohibited. Nonetheless, transactions did have to occur in some physical space inhabited by people. If anyone who had knowledge or suspicion of the transaction, that individual was not only to report to the headquarters of the Shogunate, but also release any slaves found. This prohibition also failed to incite fear into wrongdoers because the *bakufu* began to issue specific threats to the buyers and sellers:

> Concerning the buying and selling of humans
>
> According to the message, during the time of famine, if [the buying and selling of people] was strictly prohibited, it would be a great burden on the people, and so the regulations were calmly not enforced [by the bakufu]. From this point forward, the message declares that the buying and selling of people should be halted. Since this is an honorable order, it should be observed and this should

[22] The official duties of the *shugo* as stated in the *Goseibai Shikimoku*, were to suppress rebellion, prosecute murderers, and other acts of violence such as night attacks, robbery, and piracy. Clearly from article 142, however, the shugo was also responsible for maintaining all the laws of the Kamakura bakufu, including the prohibition on the buying and selling of people. See Hōjō Yasutoki, *Goseibai shikimoku* (Tōkyō: Koten Hozonkai, 1930), 9-10.

[23] Satō, *Chūsei hōsei shiryō shū*, 127. Doc. # 156.

stop. If it is disobeyed, both buyers and sellers of people will be punished for this offense.[24]

Although the punishment was vague, it can be seen as an escalation. Whereas previously buyers and sellers were to be forwarded to Kanto with an implied punishment looming, now punishment was imminent for violators of the law. However, while the *bakufu* attempted to officially stop the buying and selling of humans in the present, it allowed for the existence of already indentured slaves. In 1245, the *bakufu* issued another article, concerning human collateral used for a loan supplied by a wealthy individual.

Concerning the loan used in the buying and selling of people

As for cases where agreements were made prior to previous legislation, (1229-1239), this money should be repaid to the current owner. However, as for [arrangements made] after the establishment of the buying and selling laws, the money should not be repaid. The owner's loan should be used for repairs of Kiyomizu Temple and Gion Shrine. Also, as for slaves, they should not be returned to their current owner.[25]

This article also illuminates another way in which commoners could capitalize on the system of slavery. Those in society still doing reasonably well during the *Kangi* famine could afford to financially assist others by furnishing a loan. In order to secure a return on their loan, they needed some form of insurance, but those in desperate need of a loan might not have had anything besides human collateral. If a loan, secured by human insurance, was furnished before 1239, when the *bakufu* issued the first prohibition, then the owner of the slave was to receive his loan back in exchange for the release of servants. However, if the transaction occurred illegally following the proscription then the loan was not to be returned to the owner, but instead forwarded to *Kiyomizu-dera* and

[24] Satō, *Chūsei hōsei shiryō shū*, 121. Doc. #142.

[25] Satō, *Chūsei hōsei shiryō shū*, 90. Doc. # 244.

Gion Shrine for repairs. The repurposing of money used for human trafficking to temples, shrines, or religious projects occurred frequently and by 1256, the amount of money extracted from traffickers was such a large amount that the transport of the donation was troublesome:

> On the issue of money used for the buying and selling of people,
>
> Money used for the buying and selling of people is to be donated for the [Kamakura] Daibutsu. However, according to the alms collecting monks the forwarding of this money [from the provinces] is a burden.[26] Accordingly, an order should be handed down that transportation of the donations shall be the duty of the jitō (estate steward). So it is conveyed.[27]

In her examination of *Kanjin* campaigns in the medieval period, Janet Goodwin explains how public works projects as well as the repair and maintenance of temples relied more and more on donated funds due to increased competition for resources in the provinces.[28] By engaging wealthy provincial landowners and the commoner population, some *hijiri* (itinerant monks) collected alms, while simultaneously extending the rewards of Buddhism to a larger audience.[29] Instead of retaining possession of monies confiscated from illegal human trafficking, the *bakufu* donated funds to temples or shrines. As the leadership of the *bakufu* sought to define warrior cultural practices, they began using the money for their own soteriological projects, such as the Daibutsu at Kotokuin Temple in Kamakura. The aim of donating the money to temples and shrines in general such as

[26] The term I have translated to "alms collecting monks" is kohijiri (小聖).

[27] Satō, *Chūsei hōsei shiryō shū* 91. Doc. #304.

[28] Janet Goodwin, *Alms and Vagabonds*, 13. She suggests that by the Kamakura period competing interests in the provinces (such as the addition of jitō) took funds away from wealthy patrons of temples and shrines, thereby reducing the amount of donations received by religious institutions.

[29] Janet Goodwin, *Alms and Vagabonds, 13.*

Kiyomizu-dera and Gion, could have been an attempt to reuse funds intended for illegal purposes for meritorious deeds that could enhance karmic rewards.

From the various articles explored, it is clear that the Kamakura bakufu was in the business of ending human trafficking. However, despite issuing regulations as early as 1239, by 1256, funds collected from the buying and selling of humans were extensive enough to be a burden to transport. Clearly, attempts to ban the buying and selling of humans had failed. Adding to the problems of the leadership of the *bakufu*, sources also suggest that land stewards were enslaving commoners against their will:

> Concerning litigation about slaves
>
> Following the precedent set by the *Shikimoku*, if ten years have passed without objection, judgment of right and wrong will not extend to the issue. However, in fief territories, after the sons and underlings of the common people have been taken into the service [of the jitō], he claims that they are his retainers and that ten years have passed. Then, when the jitō transfers to a different estate, they are designated as servants. If this is true, it is untoward. In regards to the sons and retainers of *hyakushō*, even if several years have elapsed, whatever occurs shall be in accord with their desires.[30]

After having served the *jitō* in various tasks throughout his estate for such an extended period, the *jitō* claimed these sons and retainers of *hyakushō* were his slaves. Affirming that ten years had passed would allow the *jitō* to retain custody of the servants indefinitely, including if he transferred to another post far removed from his current location. The removal of the sons and retainers of *hyakushō* from their home estate upon the transfer of a *jitō* raised the attention of someone, perhaps a proprietor, and they informed the *bakufu* of this behavior. In response, the bakufu allowed these captured slaves to decide if they would rather return home or stay in the service of the *jitō*. In some cases, during times of famine or war, a servant might prefer to remain in the care of a

[30] Satō, *Chūsei hōsei shiryō shū*, 73. Doc. #291.

master instead of return home to insufficient sustenance. From this, it is apparent that the sons and retainers of *hyakushō* could come into the service of a local *jitō*, but the particulars of that service are ambiguous. What sorts of activities constituted service could include any number of odd jobs, however, doubtless the residence of the *jitō* required various persons to carry out domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning.[31]

One particularly horrific tale from the *Konjaku Monogatari* articulates one of the possible uses of servants in household. In the story, a nobleman has a deep wound and the doctor he calls to assess the problem recommends the use of dried infant to mend the problem. Dried infant was frequently utilized by medical practitioners to heal wounds and cut bones. Although there is ambiguity to what exactly dried infant was, evidence (as well the proceeding story) indicates that the item was collected from a dried fetus or dried umbilical cord.[32] In the story, the nobleman directs his son to slit the belly of his pregnant wife to extract the unborn child in order to procure dried infant. He also instructs his son to make any necessary funerary arrangements for his wife, indicating the nobleman understood the ramification of extracting the fetus was death. The doctor, however, intervenes insisting that using one's own relatives will not yield fair results. Instead, the nobleman calls in a pregnant serving woman, whose child is cut from her stomach, assumingly resulting in her death. Though this story might be highlighting the dark side of servitude, the disposability of the servant illuminates understandings of the interactions taking place within wealthy households between elites and servants.

[31] According to his diary, aristocrat Sanjōnishi Sanetaka employed several servants to attend to his family and residence. Although he is an aristocrat, this example is illustrative of the kinds of tasks servants could do. See H. Mack Horton, "Portrait of a Medieval Japanese Marriage: The Domestic Life of Sanjōnishi Sanetaka and his Wife," *Japanese Language and Literature* 37, no. 2 (2003): 137.

[32] Goble, "War and Injury," 323.

In another case, commoners were held against their will, in compensation for an absconding resident:

> Concerning whether peasants go or stay.
>
> Following the precedent set by the Shikimoku it should be left to the will of the people. Nevertheless, we have heard that the immediate relatives of an absconded peasant are being detained as property in compensation [for the absconded], or that creditors press debtors into servitude as payment for unpaid loans, these people become like inheritable property. If this is in fact true, it is exceptionally corrupt. If it is the case that there is debt owed, then calculations are to be carried out. The amount should be paid and there should be no trouble to the wife, children, and retainers [of the absconding peasant].[33]

In this article, two reasons for peasants being pressed into servitude appear to be debt and compensation for absconding relatives. While there is no immediate reasoning behind the impetus for the fleeing peasant, the second half of the article implies the absconder might be fleeing from some sort of debt, monetary or service related. Be it in compensation for fleeing relatives or as repayment of debt, according to the *bakufu*, the pressing of persons into servitude was illegal. The decision of the *bakufu* in this case supported the peasant population, not covetous land stewards. Other regulations issued concerning the buying and selling of humans illuminate the protection of exposed groups within society. An article from 1255 states:

> Concerning adopted children
>
> The individual being advanced to the position of adopted child should not be bought or sold. They should be treated as one's own family.[34]

This regulation reveals that the selling of adopted children by their parents was a problem presented to the *bakufu*. Adoption was a common practice in Japanese society of

[33] Satō, *Chūsei hōsei shiryō shū*,,72. Doc. #289.

[34] Satō, *Chūsei hōsei shiryō shū*,, 90. Doc #242.

the medieval period.[35] Scholarship regarding adoption in medieval Japan focuses on the warrior and aristocratic classes who frequently adopted heirs when they could not produce children, or did not find their own children filial or capable enough to administer their landholdings.[36] Prominent *hyakushō* also practiced adoption, as they too had hereditary control over fields, and were in need of heirs to pass on property. One list of regulations issued in 1448 by a communal village in Imabori District in Ōmi province admonishes against the adoption of children from outside the community stating, "No villager may perform the coming-of-age ceremony of a child brought in from outside with the intent of making the child a village resident."[37] Sometime later in 1498, another list of regulations insisted that "adopted children over the age of seven will not be accepted into the guild."[38] Although these two examples come from after the collapse of the Kamakura warrior government, they allude to the practice of adoption, even among peasants. Therefore, the social status of those being referenced in the article concerning adopted children is ambiguous, but could have referred to any number of semi-prominent individuals fallen on hard times.[39] Considering the *Shogunate* made human trafficking illegal fifteen years prior to this article, the buying and selling of adopted children should not have been occurring regardless. According to the *Shikimoku*, however, authority within a family unit was place solely in the hands of the parents, who had the ability to

[35] Jeffrey Mass, *Lordship and Inheritance in Early Medieval Japan: A study of the Kamakura Soryō System* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 11.

[36] Mass, *Lordship and Inheritance,* 64-82.

[37] Nagahara, "The Medieval Peasant," 333.

[38] Nagahara, "The Medieval Peasant,", 333.

[39] While the case can be made for the adoption of children with intent to sell the child for profit, sources do not corroborate this possibility.

dispossess children of their property at any point.[40] That being the case, depending on the parent, an adopted child might be place in the vulnerable position of dispossession if they displease their adopted parents.

Another article issued directly following the one concerning adopted children targets another specific group: *hinin.*

> Concerning sustenance during the Kangi Famine
>
> Unattached hinin do not fall within the jurisdiction of the law code [of the Kamakura bakufu]. Those who are classed as relatives, although they come under one's control for their entire life cannot be bought or sold. Furthermore, their offspring should not become inheritable property.[41]

Although unattached *hinin* were excluded from the prohibition, the regulation states that *hinin* under the control of a family head were not allowed to be bought or sold. Unlike adopted children, a separate regulation regarding *hinin* might have been necessary because their status as "non-person" might have left them out of the rubric of humanity 人倫. However, both articles demonstrate the bakufu's response to the buying and selling of vulnerable peoples in society.

Regulations issued by the Kamakura bakufu throughout the thirteenth century indicate that the buying and selling of humans was a persistent problem well into the 1250s, despite the bakufu's repeated prohibitions. Some commoners purposefully sold themselves and their families into slavery in order to ensure sustenance, while others used relatives or retainers as human collateral on loans, also intended to provide relief during difficult times. Involuntary slavery also occurred, when *jitō* or creditors seized

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[40] Mass, *Lordship and Inheritance*, 64-82.

[41] Satō, *Chūsei hōsei shiryō shū,*, 90. Doc. #243. In this article, the *bakufu* contrasts *hinin* that were *muen* 無縁, with those that were *shinrui kyōkai* 親類境界. Literally, *muen* means unrelated, but historians of medieval Japan, such as Amino Yoshihiko have translated *muen* as unattached., meaning they were not attached to religious institutions or any particular family. *Shinrui kyōkai* means within the boundaries of one's relatives.

commoners for failure to repay debts. In both cases, the bakufu ruled in favor of the vulnerable peasant population. Further regulations also prohibited the sale of adopted children and *hinin*, two other groups susceptible to the will of family members.

The Sex Trade and Female Nuhi

As we have seen from the articles issued by the Kamakura Bakufu, commoners frequently voluntarily entered themselves, their relatives, or their retainers into a contract with wealthy members of society in order to secure loans or receive food and shelter. However, frequently absent from the discussion of slavery in the medieval period are the actual tasks assigned to *nuhi*. As stated previously, wealthy households frequently obtained slaves and assigned them to various domestic tasks. However, sources further illuminate trafficking of women into the sex trade of Kamakura Japan.

In her work on early sexual entertainers, Janet Goodwin postulates that a variety of female entertainers existed within the medieval period and that any sweeping generalizations fail to capture the nuance of the trade.[42] While there were prostitutes who simply offered sexual services (called *yahochi*), generally those providing sexual services in the Heian and Kamakura also provided entertainment in the form of song or dance.[43] Although groups such as *asobi*, *kugutsu*, and *shirabyōshi* were distinct in the kinds of entertainment they offered, scholars have identified them as providers of sexual

[42] Janet Goodwin, *Selling Songs and Smiles: The Sex Trade in Heian and Kamakura Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 120- 151.

[43] Goodwin, *Selling Songs and Smiles*, 13.

services.[44] Either riding in boats or setting up shop on busy routes to the capital and religious sites, Goodwin argues that these performers were part of independent, possibly female-run organizations, which were not stigmatized until the later part of the Kamakura period.[45] However, as Wakita Haruko has examined, at least some women involved in sexual entertainment were female indentured servants, serving as security on a loan issued by their parents. A document dating to 1256 highlights the use of children as collateral, as well as provides additional insight into the lives of female *nuhi*. The document is a deposition filed with the b*akufu* by a female entertainer known as Tamaō.[46] The entertainer acted as guarantor for another woman (named Tokuishime) who had originally been indentured as collateral for a loan issued by a man by the name of Jitsurenbō to her adopted parent Saishin. The lender eventually sold Tokuishime's contract to another man involved in a shirabyōshi group. Tokuishime eventually absconded, leaving the *shirabyōshi* troop without the female whose contract they had just acquired. Although the document never outright claims that Tokuishime was a *shirabyōshi*, historian Wakita Haruko insists that this provides an example of exploitation, maintaining that the adopted parent of Tokuishime was actually a cover for the sale of humans into the sexual trade.[47] Wakita bases her evidence off the price required for Tokuishime's services, which was considerably higher than that of a regular

[44] See Amino Yoshihiko, *Hyōhaku to teichku: Teijū shakai e no michi* (Tōkyō: Shōgakkan, 1984), 172-190; Haruko Wakita, *Josei geinō no gneryū: kugutsu, kuseimai, shirabyoshi* (Tōkyō: Kadokawa Shoten, 2001), 141; and Janet Goodwin, *Selling Songs and Smiles*.

[45] Goodwin, *Selling Songs and Smiles*, 120-125.

[46] Haruko Wakita, *Josei geinō no gneryū: kugutsu, kuseimai, shirabyoshi* (Tōkyō: Kadokawa Shoten, 2001), 141. The document comes from the *Kamakura Ibun*, Vol. 2, 140 (Doc. 7960).

[47] Wakita, *Josei geinō no gneryū*, 141.

day laborer.[48] Although it may have been the case that Saishin was not the foster parent of Tokuishime, there is no substantive proof to corroborate this theory. Saishin very easily could have been a foster parent, looking to use their adopted child as collateral on a loan. As Goodwin points out in her evaluation of the case, Wakita assumes that the loan given out was payment in advance for services Tokuishime would conduct as a sexual entertainer.[49] However, the loan could have easily been expected to be paid, in exchange for the return of Tokuishime.

Regardless of the nature of the loan, the case of Tokuishime offers some important information regarding the situation of indentured peoples and more specifically indentured females. First, loan contracts could be traded, and likely were during the Kamakura period. Secondly, servants could eventually be returned when their term of service ended, or when family members repaid loans. Finally, female slaves could be traded into sexual industries, as well as work as domestic servants in the household of wealthy houses.

Concluding Thoughts

A didactic tale from 1283 tells the story of a small family consisting of a mother and son, who after experiencing severe famine, came to the realization they would soon starve to death.[50] In the hope of saving his mother, the young boy offers to sell himself into bondage, and although the mother disagrees, he goes ahead with the plan. Although he cries over the separation from his mother, the compiler notes that the young boy's

[48] Wakita, *Josei geinō no gneryū*, 141.

[49] Goodwin, *Selling Songs and Smiles*, 123.

[50] Nelson, "Slavery in Medieval Japan," 477.

filial piety was second to no man. Clearly, the decision of the young boy to enter into this contract was a decision made for the betterment of his own family. Although scholars have focused their attention on the exploitative aspects of the system of slavery in the medieval period, Kamakura laws reveal that the commoner population frequently entered into contractual relationships with powerful families in order to maintain their lives or the lives of those closest to them during the particularly tumultuous time.

Once commoners entered into this relationship, they became slaves or servants, and therefore were property able to be traded by elites. This relationship was not final, however, and those sold into servitude were not permanently affixed to this status. Certainly, *jitō* seized commoners and forced them into servitude as some articles suggest. However, by focusing solely on these events, and not acknowledging the situation of the many commoners purposefully entering into servitude, the agency of the destitute are readily dismissed. Despite the hardships endured in the hands of harsh masters, servitude was a survival strategy among the commoner population facing famine, illness, and warfare.

Research into *nuhi* as addressed in Kamakura law also reveals several points about the judicial branch of the Kamakura warrior government. Although slavery was technically against the law, the *bakufu* ignored regulations and allowed the commoner population to enter into servitude in order to protect their lives. The tendency of the *bakufu* also appears to have been to protect the commoner population from acquisitive landowners, not ensure vassal rights over illegal attained people.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Although living under different social circumstances both outcasts and commoners actively fought for their own survival. Scholars have frequently imagined these groups to be simply the victims of exploitation, unable to assert any control over their respective situations. However, as illuminated in both the *Ippen Shōnin Eden* and the laws of the Kamakura *bakufu*, outcasts and slaves clearly had agency and exerted a measure of control over their own lives. Doubtless, each group experienced discrimination, but by only framing these groups as victims, scholars fail to acknowledge the actions taken by these groups to define their own lives.

Outcasts were not one single group easily identified by wealth or occupation. Instead, outcasts were a vast array of peoples, working in many different professions. What they did have in common was their status as "defiled." Although having origins in ancient myths, by the medieval period, *kegare* as an ideology was an amalgamation of Shinto and Buddhist conceptions. The mingling of Shinto notions of death and blood pollution with Buddhist conceptions of the innate impure female form best illuminate this consolidation. Although this project has focused on defilement as a concept, it is important to bear in mind that *kegare* existed at one end of on a spectrum of purity. By calling into question the poorly defined nature of defilement, the project indirectly inquires into the nature of *hare* (purity). Since *kegare* was mutable and varied depending on the situation, *hare* must have also been precarious. In addition, because *kegare* defines

outcast groups, the spectrum of purity on which the concept resides could be another way in which scholars can view the social order of pre-modern Japan. Investigation into where the vast majority of medieval commoners, not just pure elites, and defiled outcasts could offer additional insight into the dynamic social structure of Japan while simultaneously giving scholars a better understanding of those residing at the ends of the purity spectrum.

Through a connection with *kegare*, certain outcast groups were able to create relationships with temples and shrines performing tasks only able to be executed by those considered "defiled." The relationship proved to be semi-symbiotic because while outcast groups such as *inu-jinin*, *sarugaku* actors, and *hinin* ,were able to secure a role in society, Buddhist practitioners were able to avoid problems associated with defilement because they were able to employ outcasts. Utilization of *inu-jinin* by the temples as mortuary workers was beneficial to monks and the Buddhist establishment in general because it allowed priests to serve in a funerary capacity without actually having to touch the dead and thus avoid the pollution caused by death. *Inu-jinin* also functioned as policemen, debt collectors, cleaners, and construction workers. These positions were coveted, and disputes between groups of *inu-jinin* exemplify the desire to secure rights to work at religious institutions performing defiling tasks. In order to attract constituents temples and shrines also employed *sarugaku* actors to perform alongside sermons. In order to draw donations and followers to Buddhism, *sarugaku* performances often accompanied sermons because that made the sermons more entertaining and thus patronized more often. The performances acted as purification rituals in which the actors, through the performance, were infused with the various defilements of the community. The actors

were thus defiled from the activity of excising the defilements from the community. Clearly, both *inu-jinin* and *sarugaku* actors play important secular and soteriological roles within religious communities.

Through this affiliation with religious institutions, outcasts were able to subsist while being outside the agrarian system. This directly challenges assertions that pre-modern Japan was essentially agrarian, revealing a much more nuanced picture of the medieval economy as multifaceted. In addition, the connection between outcast groups and religious institutions questions notion of center and periphery in pre-modern Japan. Religious institutions such as temples and shrines were one of the *kenmon* of power and therefore connected to the governing center. Although relegated to certain occupations and directly subordinate to the temples, the designation of peripheral fails to capture the situation of outcasts in medieval Japan. Instead, I propose outcasts can be best defined as "liminally central," since they are the integral to religious institutions, but are still designated as low in the social order.

Hinin were another outcast group with ties to religious institutions. Considered unequal to other humans, the *hinin* of medieval Japan were frequently those in society afflicted with deforming ailments such as *rai.* Since this was a very visible affliction, those who encountered *hinin* in society were immediately aware of their ailment. During the Kamakura period, both medical and spiritual questions presented by *rai* and other deformities fell into the hands of Buddhist practitioners who were emerging as a class of medical specialists as well as mediators of the divine world. While some approached *rai* as a medical issue, the condition held multiple cultural meanings. Those with *rai* were frequently painted as inherently transgressive because the gross afflictions and

deformities carried by ill individuals were thought to be caused by the accumulation of bad karma. Because damaging karma was a result of past transgressions, outcasts stood out in the medieval imagination as past transgressors, living this life deformed to compensate for crimes committed in a previous life. In this way, temples were able to capitalize on their association with *hinin*. By assuring patrons were frequently exposed to the consequences of transgressive behavior against Buddhist doctrine (i.e. lepers), monks were able to ensure the continued devotion of constituents. While on the surface the nature of the relationship between *hinin* and religious institutions appears relatively biased, through performing these roles, ill who would otherwise be destitute were able to play a significant soteriological role for Buddhist temples, while also receiving donations for their own subsistence.

Research into *hinin* also illuminates the problems associated with medieval social designations. Recent scholarship seeks to complicate the narrative of the simplistic precursory nature of the medieval period ascribed by many earlier historians. Scholars have determined that medieval Japan had distinct social designations, which terms were not the obvious forerunners to early modernity. As the work of Thomas Conlan, Amino Yoshihiko, and Thomas Kierstead illuminates, medieval Japan was not essentially agrarian, nor did social classifications from the period hold the same meanings as appear in later periods. Examining the term *hyakushō*, Thomas Conlan determines that the meaning of farmer did not become attached to the term *hyakushō* until after the medieval period. Therefore, medieval historians must look at designations in the period on their own terms. With this in mind, Amino and Kierstead assert that the terms used to describe outcasts in the medieval period did not have the same connotations as those in the

Tokugawa period despite the use of similar words. Over time, as new administrations sought to classify people, new meanings were layered atop old terms. Reassessing the status of groups such as outcasts and slaves, I hope to illustrate not only the lives of these groups, but also add to the re-evaluations of medieval terms within their specific historical context.

In addition, further investigation of *hinin*, particularly in light of the emergence of new Buddhist figures seeking to spread salvation to all, reveals that there were active agents within their own lives. Through the images of the *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, the ways in which *hinin* procured donations, food, and care are illustrated. *Hinin* could move to different locations if better opportunities waited at other religious sites. Through the utilization of these picture scrolls, the project adds to the growing scholarship utilizing visual sources to map the medieval world to investigate people and phenomena not easily understood through written sources alone.[1]

As the scrolls reveals, *hinin* were not the only group represented in the drifting population of the medieval period. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries proved to be tumultuous for commoners, who faced strange climate fluctuations, famine, illness, and sometimes warfare in their daily lives. Striving to survive, commoners created a number of survival strategies to combat the problems faced in everyday life. One such strategy was the sale of one's self, relatives, or retainers into servitude. Although on the surface, the sale of family members into slavery seems callous and self-serving, in actuality commoners entering to these agreements saw them as the only way to assuage their suffering or the suffering of their family members. Sale into a wealthy house had the

[1] See Conlan's *In Need of Divine Intervention: Takezake Suenaga's Scrolls of the Mongol Invasions of Japan*, and Haruko Wakabayashi's *The Seven Tengu Scrolls: Evil and Rhetoric of Legitimacy in Medieval Japanese Buddhism (*Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012).

potential to ensure access food and shelter. Examination of Kamakura law illuminates how many slaves within medieval society had entered into these relationships to protect their lives. While outcasts and slaves were significantly different, these two groups both actively sought to assuage their situations and protect their lives. Although many have portrayed them as objects either used or traded, outcasts and slaves were agents in their own lives looking to solve the challenges they faced.

Furthermore, the project illuminates the ways in which the laws of the Kamakura *bakufu* can give valuable insight into the underlying social issues of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Although sources regarding slaves and servants are scarce, the actions taken by the Kamkura *bakufu* can provide a window through which historians can evaluate the problems faced in the daily lives of the commoner population. Similarly, by focusing on laws issued by the Kamakura *bakufu* concerning social issues, scholars can ascertain the motivations of those working in the higher levels of the warrior government. In this way, investigation of "liminal" groups within society can provide a window for viewing the more central figures of Japanese history.

As a final thought, although I have been investigating both groups within a western conception of independent agency, the nature of the relationships formed with either powerful religious institutions or wealthy patrons could be further examined under Japanese understandings of agency. Investigation of the actions and lives of outcasts and slaves under Buddhist conceptions of interdependent agency and passive living as opposed to modern western ideas of autonomy and independence could re-frame the understanding of actions in the medieval period.

APPENDIX

IMAGES

Chapter I

FIGURE 1
The Queen Māyā Ensemble

Source: "Queen Māyā and Heavenly Beings," Tōkyō National Museum: Horyuji Treasure, figurines, Seventh Century, *www.tnm.jp*, *http://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_collection/index*.

FIGURE 1:
Hinin by the Road Near Katsura Hall

Source: Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, ed, Shigemi Komatsu, (Tōkyō : Chūō Kōronsha, 1988), 201.

FIGURE 2:
Rai Sufferer in the Scroll of Afflictions

Source: Andrew Goble "Images of Illness: Interpreting the Medieval *Scrolls of Afflictions* ," in *Currents in Medieval Japanese History: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey P. Mass* (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2009): 169.

FIGURE 3:
Hinin Fighting off Crows Near Kasate Shrine

Source: Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, ed, Shigemi Komatsu, (Tōkyō : Chūō Kōronsha, 1988), 163.

FIGURE 4:
Hinin Near Ichihime Shrine

Source: Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, ed, Shigemi Komatsu, (Tōkyō : Chūō Kōronsha, 1988), 196.

FIGURE 5:
Hinin by Sekidera

Source: Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, ed, Shigemi Komatsu, (Tōkyō : Chūō Kōronsha, 1988), 179.

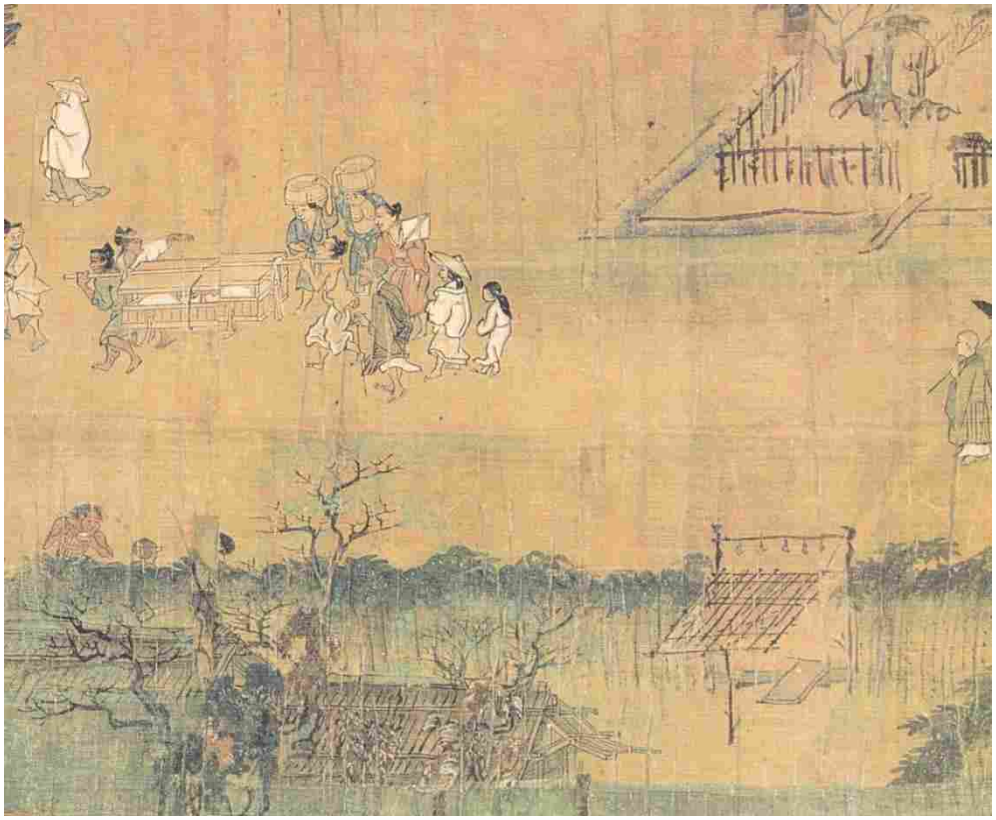
FIGURE 6:
Chasing away *hinin*

Source: Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, ed, Shigemi Komatsu, (Tōkyō : Chūō Kōronsha, 1988), 141.

FIGURE 7:
Food Preparation Near Taimadera 1

Source: Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, ed, Shigemi Komatsu, (Tōkyō : Chūō Kōronsha, 1988), 231.

FIGURE 8:
Food Preparation Near Taimadera 2



Source: Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, ed, Shigemi Komatsu, (Tōkyō : Chūō Kōronsha, 1988), 230.

FIGURE 9:
Feeding the Destitute in Ueno

Source: Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, ed, Shigemi Komatsu, (Tōkyō : Chūō Kōronsha, 1988), 238-239.

FIGURE 10:
Hinin Sitting at the Entrance of Ten Shrine

Source: Shōkai, *Ippen Shōnin Eden*, ed, Shigemi Komatsu, (Tōkyō : Chūō Kōronsha, 1988), 238-239.

Chapter III

FIGURE 1:
A Hungry Ghost from the *Gaki-zoshi*

Source: *Scroll of Hungry Ghosts*, *oregondigital.org/digcol/aaa/*

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